Unsung Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll

REVISED EDITION

THE BIRTH OF ROCK IN THE WILD YEARS BEFORE ELVIS

NICK TOSCHES

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

https://archive.org/details/unsungheroesofro0000tosc

Unsung Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll

Books by Nick Tosches

Country

Hellfire

Power on Earth

Cut Numbers

Unsung Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll

THE BIRTH OF ROCK IN THE WILD YEARS BEFORE ELVIS

NICK TOSCHES

Harmony Books
New York

For Richard Meltzer

Copyright © 1984 Nick Tosches
Copyright © 1991 Nick Tosches, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Published by Harmony Books, 201 East 50th Street, New York, New York 10022. Member of the Crown Publishing Group.

HARMONY and colophon are trademarks of Crown Publishers, Inc.

Manufactured in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Tosches, Nick.
Unsung heroes of rock 'n' roll / Nick Tosches. — Rev. ed.
p. cm.
Includes index.
1. Rock musicians—United States—Biography. 2. Rock music—United States—History and criticism. I. Title.
ML394.T67 1991
781.66'092'2—dc20
[B] 90-47515
CIP

ISBN 0-517-58052-7

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Revised Edition

Contents

Preface to the Revised Edition vii
Foreword xi
Introduction 1
Jesse Stone
He Who Controls Rhythm 12
Big Joe Turner
Steak for Breakfast, Gal Meat on a Rainy Day 22
Nat King Cole
Beyond Pink Cadillacs 30
Louis Jordan
Hep and the Art of Alto-Sax Repair 39
Wynonie Harris
The Man Who Shook Down the Devil 45
Charles Brown
From the School of Cool, Endlessly Drifting 54
Ella Mae Morse
The Cow-Cow Girl 64
Cecil Gant
Owl Stew, and All That 69
Amos Milburn
The Chicken-Shack Factor 72
Roy Brown
Good Rockin' Tonight 77
Louis Prima
Gleeby Rhythm Is Born 82
Ming and Ling
The Chinese Hillbillies 89
The Treniers
Their God Wore Shades 92

Stick McGhee
Spo-Dee-O-Dee: How to Get It, How to Use It 99
Young Bill Haley
The Lounge Act That Transcendeth All Knowing 103
Roy Hall
See, We Was All Drunk 109
Hardrock Gunter
The Mysterious Pig-Iron Man 114
Merrill Moore
The Saddle, Rock & Rhythm Man 119
Skeets McDonald
Whom in the End the Tattooed Lady Slew 123
The Clovers
Absalom, Absalom! Doo-Wah, Doo-Wah! 127
The Dominoes
The Glory of Bubbonia 133
Jackie Brenston
To the Package Store in Style 139
The Midnighters
From the Sins of Annie to the Twist 145
Jimmie Logsdon
The Man Without a Subtitle 150
Screamin' Jay Hawkins
Horror and the Foot-Shaped Ashtray 155
Wanda Jackson
Laced by Satan, Unlaced by the Lord 165
Johnny Ace
Number One with a Bullet 170
Esau Smith
The Hairy and the Smooth 176
What That Was
A Chronology of the Coming of Rock 'n' Roll 185
Archaeologia Rockola 201
Old Noise, New Plastic
Unsung Heroes on Compact Disc 259
Index 269

Preface to the Revised Edition

Now that the 1980s, whatever the fuck they were, are, like the great Liberace himself, dead and gone, can't we get this whole dumb business of rock 'n' roll out of the way for once and for all?

I mean, let's get it straight. Rock 'n' roll is dead. Deader than the eighties. Deader than Liberace. Deader than the papal penis. Dead. Bill Haley, the first white rock-'n'-roll star, came, turned to shit, and went all in one fell swoop, by the summer of 1954. In other words, the cycle was already complete, the beast of rock 'n' roll had been tamed for the circus of the masses, by the time Elvis (another dead fuck) came along. Elvis played out the cycle again, in the span of six months: In "Milkcow Blues Boogie," his third record, made in December 1954, raw power has already turned to schmaltz. You can hear it in that well-rehearsed false start, followed by that voice foreshadowing bad beatnik movies to come: "Hold it, fellas. That don't move. Let's get real, real gone." He didn't have far to go from there to "Bossa Nova Baby" (1963), after which came the Beatles, or the beginning of rock 'n' roll as culture, replete with a fucking limey accent—*culture*, which neither "From a Buick 6" in the summer of 1965 nor anything since could save us. Even the idea of rock 'n' roll being dead was old by then. The Maddox Brothers and Rose had recorded "The Death of Rock & Roll" in 1956.

I mean, here we are in the 1990s, whatever the fuck they are, and this rock-'n'-roll culture shit is still with us. Take a good

look at the bald spot on Paul Shaffer's head. That's what rock 'n' roll is today: a fucking bar-mitzvah band led by some fucking asshole baldy. (Look under Dion's hat, you'll fine something almost as bad: religion.) It's Muzak on the elevator to middle age. What are the Eurythmics but the Steve and Eydie of our own dismal descent into the blandness of middle age? Is there any difference between Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." and Chrysler's "The Pride Is Back/Born in America" advertising campaign? Is that what rock 'n' roll in its death has become, a fucking car commercial? Can anything used to sell beer be alive? Why doesn't that bald fool get his ass down to Carl Perkins's Apollo Hair Systems in Memphis? Better yet, why doesn't he do himself in? Liberace dies and he lives. I don't get it.

I mean, I tried to like rap music. It sounded incendiary from a distance. Maybe it was creating strife between the races, something like that. Then I listened to it. I've heard more incendiary lines on "Leave It to Beaver." But, after all, could anything called "black music" be any less bland or superficial than—hey, let's get real, real gone—"white music." Public Image? Guns N' Roses? 2 Live Crew? It's a pitiful day when the only people so-called rock 'n' roll can offend are Tipper Gore and the fucking ADL.

I mean, I've seen Pete Townsend as an after-dinner speaker at the Waldorf. Don't get me wrong; he was good. A regular Sir Cedric Hardwicke or some such shit. But—hey—"I hope I die before I get old"? Sure, that was a quarter of a century ago; but, still, he ought to be pushing up daisies by now. And who are the Rolling Stones kidding? Even Lawrence Welk knew when to turn off the bubble machine and call it quits.

We live in an age in which our Caesars no longer write their own speeches, but instead, like hollow actors, enunciate platitudes written for them, like so much vapid advertising copy. It has been so long since they have elucidated their own honest thoughts that honest thought itself is instinctively shunned as taboo, as something that might alienate the consumer. Much of the writing in magazines—not only about rock 'n' roll, but about everything—has taken on that same deadening quality, as if writers were ghostwriting their own thoughts to conform to some

norm of taste. "*Time* cries and lets you care." Fuck that shit. "We Are the World" was not rock 'n' roll. It was the sound of *Time* crying. Maybe real rock 'n' roll is impossible in an age of safe sex, an age in which the youth of America seem more driven by venality than by venery, an age in which yellow suspenders are regarded as a sign of power rather than of putzhood.

But what the hell. We are here to praise rock 'n' roll, not to linger at its grave. If we can live without Liberace, we can live without rock 'n' roll as well.

This book began as a series of articles for a magazine called *Creem* in 1979. *Creem* was one of those magazines, which no longer exist, for which one could write pretty much as one pleased, relatively free of the editorial restraints designed to ensure that neither advertisers nor readers be offended by a politically incorrect sentiment, a scurrilous word, or, God forbid, a sense of humor. I began the series, which bore the same title as this book, with the piece on Wynonie Harris. I wanted to celebrate rock 'n' roll and glorify those who had been forgotten; to show that there was no new thing under the sun and that what had come before often far surpassed in brilliance the excesses and pretensions of its pale and errant progeny. Four years later, in cahoots with Michael Pietsch, who was then an editor at Scribner's, I expanded the series into a book, which came out in the summer of 1984. Since then, it's been nice to see, there has been renewed interest in many of the characters I wrote about; and much of the music at the heart of this book has been reissued on compact discs, often plugging the book as a source.

People have told me how much this book makes them laugh. It surely isn't a serious book; it didn't come into being as such. I wrote it as it came to me, not really caring, with the music itself behind me for inspiration (along with the Internal Revenue Service, I clearly remember). I wanted the book to encompass all the historical facts and arcane data that I had been collecting about the dawn of rock 'n' roll; I wanted to bring all that together in one place. At the same time, I wanted to have fun. That this fun—what else can you call it, even in a book?—has been passed along to readers is the sort of reward that occasionally makes all

this typing worth it. If the book leads as well to further and wider rediscovery of the music itself, so much the better. In any event, while a slew of factual amendments have been made for this new edition, I messed not at all with its dirty little soul. New unsung heroes have been added, along with a listing of compact-disc reissues; but nothing new in spirit.

Billy Miller and Miriam Linna of *Kicks* magazine and Jonas Bernholm of Mr. R&B Records generously provided many of the new illustrations. As it turns out, these are characters whose businesses I can plug with all sincerity. *Kicks* (Post Office Box 646, Cooper Station, New York, New York 10003) is a publication that belongs in the home of everyone interested in real rock 'n' roll, fried foods, and the underbelly of American culture. Bernholm's little family of labels (Mr. R&B Records, Pl. 8300, 643 00 Vingåker, Sweden), many of whose albums are noted in the "Old Noise, New Plastic" section of this book, has done more than any other company to preserve and further the music at the heart of these pages.

I want to thank Dave DiMartino and Connie Kramer of *Creem*, wherever they are; Michael Pietsch, the editor of this new edition as well as of the original; my right arm, Noni Watters; my agent and conspirator, Russ Galen; Judith Wilmot, who led me to Virgil's words on the dollar bill; my alma mater, the New York Public Library; and, of course, the unsung heroes themselves. As for myself, I'd rather have the cash.

—Nick Tosches
New York, 1990

Introduction

The history of rock 'n' roll has been obscured by a great deal of misknowing and ignorance, and by a great many lies. There are those who believe that rock 'n' roll was a sudden, magical effusion; that a young man named Elvis Presley one day rose, dipped his comb in water, swept his hair into a duck's-ass, bopped out into the world, and created—thank God, Alan Freed was there to give it a name—rock 'n' roll. This is perhaps the most popular and abiding myth. It is merely another lesson learnt from that cherished American history book that taught us that Peary went to the North Pole alone.

At the other extreme, there are those who believe that rock 'n' roll was created by black people, then seized and commercialized by whites. This is merely a lesson from a revised edition of that same cherished history book. One could make just as strong a case for Jews being the central ethnic group in rock 'n' roll's early history; for it was they who produced many of the most important records, wrote some of the best songs, cultivated much of the greatest talent, and operated the majority of the pioneering record companies.

Rock 'n' roll was not created solely by blacks or by whites; and it certainly did not come into being all of a sudden. It evolved slowly, wrought by blacks and by whites, some of them old and some of them young, in the South and in the West, in the North and in the East. Its makers were driven not so much by any pure creative spirit, but rather by the desire to make money. Nothing can better bring together a black man and a white, a young man

and an old, a country man and a city man, than a dollar placed between them. Rock 'n' roll flourished because it sold. The more it sold, the more it flourished. The heroes, unsung and sung alike, of rock 'n' roll all had one thing in common: they liked Cadillacs. If rock 'n' roll had not been sellable, they would not have been making it, or trying to make it.

A senator whom I met when I was living in Tennessee told me that he had once asked Colonel Sanders what he honestly thought of black people. "They eat chicken, don't they?" had been the Colonel's smiling reply. One can fully appreciate rock 'n' roll without knowing anything of its history. But to appreciate its history, to know anything about it, one must begin to see just how much rock 'n' roll and fried chicken have in common. It is seductively easy—and not unfitting—to rhapsodize about the classic 1947 recording of "Good Rockin' Tonight" by Wynonie Harris; but it is perhaps more enlightening to acknowledge that it was eventually followed by "Good Mambo Tonight," just as Elvis Presley's earth-shaking early records were eventually followed by "Bossa Nova Baby" and "Do the Clam." But this is what makes rock 'n' roll so intriguing. Whether one regards it as art or as business, its history—one of greed and innocence, tastelessness and brilliance, the ridiculous and the sublime (not to mention sex, violence, and pink silk suits)—is a fun-house mirror reflection of the American dream gone gaga.

Rock 'n' roll emerged in the middle of a war, when the world was mad. As the summer of 1942 began, the outlook of the recording industry was bleak. Records were made of shellac, and the countries that were America's major sources of shellac were blockaded. The shipping and distribution of records were becoming more and more problematic, since the Office of Defense Transportation had commandeered every means of transport. When the president of the American Federation of Musicians, James Caesar Petrillo, a crusader against "the menace of mechanical music," announced on June 25 that all recording licenses would become null and void on August 1 and would not be renewed until certain excessive demands were met, the industry felt as if it had received the kiss of death. Since this warning

meant that no union musicians would be making records after July 31, companies rushed to lay in enough recordings to last them through the strike.

The recording ban went on for more than a year, but it did not affect the industry the way most thought it would. Nineteen forty-three turned out to be the recording industry's most prosperous year in more than a decade. The problems caused by the shellac shortage, erratic distribution, and the A.F.M. ban were more than offset by a record-buying public who wanted dearly to be distracted from the reality of war, and who had the money to pay for that distraction. The style and spirit of popular music were changing, too; and change creates excitement. Big-band swing was still the rage. Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Harry James—these were the men music belonged to in the early 1940s. Goodman and James recorded for Columbia. Miller and Tommy Dorsey recorded for Victor. Jimmy Dorsey recorded for Decca.

Columbia, Victor, and Decca were the three companies that dominated the industry at the time of the A.F.M. ban. Johnny Mercer's new Capitol label, which had begun as Liberty Records on April 9, 1942, had barely gotten started when Petrillo's warning came. Yet Capitol not only survived, it thrived. Something new was going on beneath big-band swing, and Capitol was a part of it. The second record that Capitol released was "Cow-Cow Boogie" by the new-wave boogie-woogie team of pianist Freddie Slack and singer Ella Mae Morse, both of whom had worked in Jimmy Dorsey's band. "Cow-Cow Boogie" was released on July 1, and it hit the pop charts the next month. Another of Capitol's early artists was Nat King Cole. At the age of twenty-four, Cole was already one of the most important and innovative musicians on the West Coast. By the time he drifted into mainstream popular music later in the decade, he had greatly influenced Charles Brown, Cecil Gant, Amos Milburn, and other singing pianists whose names have been more closely associated than Cole's with the early history of rock 'n' roll.

Brown and Milburn came to Los Angeles from Texas, Gant from Tennessee. From the Midwest came blues shouters Big Joe

Turner and Wynonie Harris. In New York jazz bands were being rent apart. Those musicians who were not bowing their shark-skin knees in fealty to that strange new stuff called be-bop were becoming involved with that other strange new music, which as yet had no name. Decca, the least conservative of the three major companies, had signed the first of these fugitives from jazz, Louis Jordan. A former alto saxophonist in Chick Webb's band, Jordan had since the end of 1938 been leading his own group, the Tympany Five. Jordan's music had grown more audacious, louder and wilder, with the passing of time. He had all but been disowned by the jazz establishment. "It's a shame that crap like this is played by a jump band of this caliber," complained a 1941 issue of *Down Beat* in its review of one of his records. But at the same time, Jordan's records were rising high on *Billboard's* "Harlem Hit Parade" charts; and in 1944 they began crossing over to the pop charts.

As the new music spread, and as it became obvious that the prospering major companies were for the most part uninterested in it, numerous little labels were founded by men and women who smelled money in what was going on. In 1942 during the A.F.M. ban, Herman Lubinsky started Savoy Records in downtown Newark; in Los Angeles the songwriter Otis J. René, Jr., established Excelsior ("The All Colored Recording Company"); and Joe Davis formed Beacon Records in New York. By the end of the year Beacon already had a hit of sorts, Savannah Churchill's "Fat Meat Is Good Meat."

In 1943 Ike and Bess Berman founded Apollo Records in Harlem (they moved downtown before long); in Los Angeles Robert Sherman started Premier (which became Atlas in September of the next year), and Leon René, the brother of Excelsior's founder, formed Exclusive. In 1944 Jules Braun began DeLuxe Records in Linden, New Jersey; Richard A. Nelson started Gilt-Edge in Los Angeles; Al Greene founded National Records in New York; Bill Quinn started Gulf Records in Houston; and Sydney Nathan incorporated King Records in Cincinnati. In 1945 came several more Los Angeles companies: Modern, started by Jules, Joe, and Saul Bihari; Philo, formed by Ed

and Leo Mesner (Philo's name was changed to Aladdin in March 1946 due to legal difficulties); Bronze, begun by Leroy Hurte; and Four-Star, formed by Richard A. Nelson to supersede his Gilt-Edge label. In New York that year, Irving Feld and Viola Marsham started Super Disc; in Newark Irving Berman founded Manor; and men in well-cut costly suits formed Mercury in Chicago. In 1946 Bill Quinn began Gold Star in Houston, to take the place of Gulf; Jim Bulleit started Bullet Records in Nashville; Art Rupe established Specialty in Los Angeles. In 1947 Herb Abramson and Ahmet Ertegun started Atlantic Records in New York; Leonard and Phil Chess began Aristocrat in Chicago (the name of the company was changed to Chess a couple of years later). In 1949 Randy Wood started Dot Records in Gallatin, Tennessee; Saul M. Kaul founded Freedom, Macy Lela Wood formed Macy's, and Don Robey started Peacock, all in Houston; and in Los Angeles Lew Chudd began Imperial. In 1950 Lillian McMurry started Trumpet Records in Jackson, Mississippi. In 1951 Ernie Young founded the Nashboro label in Nashville. In 1952 came three Memphis companies: James Mattis's Duke Records, Lester Bihari's Meteor Records, and Sam Phillips's Sun records.

These small independent companies—mongrel labels, they were called within the industry—were the breeding grounds of rock 'n' roll. None of them had any real ethnic or esthetic identity. They all released whatever they thought might sell. Aladdin, Specialty, Mercury, Atlantic, Chess, and other labels known for their black rhythm-and-blues product all released hillbilly records on the side. King Records had both Wynonie Harris and Grandpa Jones. Thrown in among Apollo's various R&B releases were records by Dean Martin and by Smilin' Eddie Hill and the Tennessee Mountain Boys. DeLuxe started out with Tex Grande and His Range Riders and Billy Eckstine. These companies' catalogues were merely an exaggerated reflection of what was going on generally.

As black music began rocking in the 1940s, there was a parallel development in country music. It was called hillbilly boogie, when it was called anything at all. It was heard in some of the

Delmore Brothers' King records—most notably in their 1946 recordings "Hillbilly Boogie" and "Freight Train Boogie"—and in the Four Star recordings of the Maddox Brothers and Rose. "Rootie Tootie," Hank Williams's third MGM release, recorded in 1947, was rock 'n' roll as much as anything else. It became common for country singers and rhythm-and-blues singers to cover each other's material. Wynonie Harris recorded Hank Penny's "Bloodshot Eyes" and Louie Innis's "Good Mornin' Judge." Eddie Crosby covered his "Lovesick Blues." Country singer Jimmy Ballard did Bull Moose Jackson's "I Want a Bow-legged Woman." The York Brothers covered the Dominoes' "Sixty-Minute Man." By the early 1950s it was not uncommon to encounter simultaneous country and rhythm-and-blues hit recordings of the same song—"Hearts of Stone" by the Charms and by Red Foley, for instance, or "Crying in the Chapel" by Rex Allen and by the Orioles. Everybody liked chicken.

It is difficult to say precisely when the words "rock 'n' roll" came to describe what was going on. The phrase itself is immemorial. It had been popular for its sexual connotations in music of the 1920s. In the fall of 1922 blues singer Trixie Smith recorded a song by J. Berni Barbour called "My Daddy Rocks Me (with One Steady Roll)" for Black Swan Records. Her record inspired various lyrical elaborations: "Rock That Thing" by Lil Johnson, "Rock Me Mama" by Ikey Robinson, and so on.

By the early thirties, rock 'n' roll was more than a fuck-phrase. It connoted a new sensuality of rhythm, the first inklings of that new style and spirit that were to overtake music a decade later. In 1931 Duke Ellington cut "Rockin' in Rhythm" for Victor. In *Transatlantic Merry-Go-Round*, an awful United Artists movie released in the fall of 1934, the Boswell Sisters sang a song called "Rock and Roll." Gladys Presley of Tupelo was pregnant that autumn. (And, believe me, the Boswell Sisters' "Rock and Roll" was almost as bad as "Bossa Nova Baby.")

In the 1940s the phrase gathered momentum as the music gathered momentum. By 1944 the music of the Nat King Cole Trio was being advertised as "Royal Rockin' Rhythm." In January 1947 a National Records advertisement for Big Joe Turner's

"Miss Brown Blues" described its product as "GROOVY RHYTHM THAT REALLY ROCKS!" In a May 1948 ad for Brownie McGhee's R&B tribute to the first black major-league baseball players, "Robbie-Dobey Boogie," Savoy Records exclaimed, "IT JUMPS, IT'S MADE, IT ROCKS, IT ROLLS."

Roy Brown's "Good Rockin' Tonight" was released by DeLuxe in September 1947. It was not a hit. Wynonie Harris recorded the song for King in December 1947. It was issued in February 1948. Slowly but surely it ascended the "Race" charts (no more "Harlem Hit Parade" for progressive *Billboard*); by June it was Number 1.

After that, if it rocked, it sold. So, in 1948: "We're Gonna Rock" by Wild Bill Moore (Savoy), "Rockin' Boogie" by Joe Lutcher (Specialty), "Rockin' the House" by Memphis Slim (Miracle), and "Rockin' Jenny Jones" by Hattie Noel (MGM); in 1949: "Rockin' at Midnight" by Roy Brown (DeLuxe), "Rock the Joint" by Jimmy Preston (Gotham), "All She Wants to Do Is Rock" by Wynonie Harris (King), and "Rock the House" by Tiny Grimes (Atlantic).

At first the industry establishment did not quite know what to make of the new music. Reviewing Johnny Otis's record "Barrel House Stomp" in January 1949, *Billboard*, nonplussed, simply declared it to be "One of the loudest records ever made." A few months later, when it reviewed Wild Bill Moore's "Rock and Roll" and Louis Jordan's "Cole Slaw," *Billboard* was valiantly but awkwardly trying to adjust. Moore's record was "Another frenetic installment in the pounding 'good rock' serial. A potent new platter of its kind." In its finest remedial hep-talk, *Billboard* said of Jordan's record: "Band really rocks." A month later the term "race" was forsaken for the cooler "rhythm and blues."

In 1950 the real flood began: "I'm Gonna Rock" by Connie Jordan (Coral), "Sausage Rock" by Doc Sausage (Regal), "Rockin' the Blues" by Pee Wee Crayton (Modern), "Rock with It" by Johnny Moore's Three Blazers (RCA-Victor), "Rockin' Rhythm" by Pee Wee Barnum (Imperial), "We're Gonna Rock" by Cecil Gant doing business as Gunter Lee Carr (Decca), "Rockin' with Red" by Piano Red (RCA-Victor), "Rockin'

Blues" by Johnny Otis with Mel Walker (Savoy), and "How About Rocking with Me?" by Piney Brown (Apollo).

By now it was obvious that what was going on was more than a "serial," as *Billboard* had called it in the spring of 1949. Reviewing Connie Jordan's Coral recording of "I'm Gonna Rock" in February 1950, *Billboard* whined that it was "The umpteenth variation on 'Good Rocking Tonight'." But the trade publication was at the same time becoming astute enough to notice that the record in point did not "have the real gone spirit."

In 1951 came "Rock Little Baby" by Cecil Gant (Decca), "Let's Rock a While" by Amos Milburn (Aladdin), "Rockin' and Rollin'" by Little Son Jackson (Imperial), and "Rock, H-Bomb, Rock" by H-Bomb Ferguson (Atlas). Nineteen fifty-one was also the year that Little Richard's first record, "Taxi Blues," was released by Victor, and that Bill Haley began covering R&B hits—Jackie Brenston's remarkable "Rocket '88,'" the Griffin Brothers' "Pretty Baby"—for Dave Miller's little Holiday Records company in Philadelphia.

In 1952 came Haley's version of "Rock the Joint" (Essex), "Rock, Rock, Rock" by Willis "Gator Tail" Jackson (Atlantic), "Rocking on Sunday Night" by the Treniers (Okeh), "Rock Me All Night Long" by the Ravens (Mercury), "We're Gonna Rock This Joint" by the Jackson Brothers (RCA-Victor), and "Rock, Rock, Rock" by Amos Milburn. By year's-end there was even a Rockin' Records Company in Los Angeles. (There had been a Rock-It Records in Baltimore in 1948-49, but it did not last.) In 1953 came "Rockin' Is Our Business" by the Treniers (Okeh), "Rock Me" by Lucky Joe Almond (Trumpet), "Easy Rocking" by Sam Butera (RCA-Victor), and "Rock Me Baby" by Johnny Otis (Peacock).

By 1954 rock 'n' roll dominated the music industry. Many of rock 'n' roll's first generation—several of whom are the subjects of this book's chapters: Roy Brown, Cecil Gant, Wynonie Harris, Louis Jordan, Amos Milburn, and others—were already over the hill, dead, or forgotten. A new breed dominated the early fifties. Their sound was less raw, more commercial. As it overwhelmed the marketplace, the industry could do nothing but bow to it.

The Dominoes' "Sixty-Minute Man" had crossed over from the R&B to the pop charts in the summer of 1951. Bill Haley's "Crazy, Man, Crazy" had been a Top Twenty pop hit in the spring of 1953. In 1954 "Gee" by the Crows, "Sh-Boom" by the Chords, and "Hearts of Stone" by the Charms were all Top Twenty pop hits. Alan Freed's first East Coast dance concert, held at the Newark Armory on May 1, 1954, drew more than ten thousand people. His late-night WINS radio show was the rage of New York. In calling the music "rock 'n' roll"—though he was certainly not the first who had done so; he was only the most influential of those who had—Freed has rinsed the Dixie Peach from its image, rendering it more agreeable to the palate of the greater public. Big Joe Turner's masterpiece, "Shake, Rattle and Roll," shook the ground that spring, summer, and fall.

The major companies were paying now for their sins. Looking askance for too long at rock 'n' roll, thinking that it was a passing trend, nothing more than the "serial" that *Billboard* had called it, they began to see exactly how much money they had been missing out on since the late forties. All the best-selling rock-'n'-roll hits, all the biggest artists, had belonged to those mongrel labels.

As 1955 began, the major labels tried desperately to cash in on rock 'n' roll. Since they really did not understand what rock 'n' roll was, the maladroit rushing of their greed was ridiculous to behold. Columbia decided that Tony Bennett would be its rock-'n'-roll star. "DIG THE CRAZIEST!! HE SWINGS!! HE ROCKS!! HE GOES!!" Bennett's "Close Your Eyes" was pushed as an "ASTOUNDING RHYTHM AND BLUES RENDITION." Needless to say, Tony didn't make it as a rock-'n'-roll star. RCA-Victor's proposal was more absurd. "DIG PERRY IN ACTION ON A GREAT 'ROCK-AND-ROLL' RECORD," implored the January 1955 ads for Perry Como's cover version of Gene & Eunice's "Ko Ko Mo." But no one was laughing at RCA-Victor a year later.

Nineteen fifty-four, the year of rock 'n' roll's ascension, was a quintessentially American year all-round. It was the year of the first atomic-powered submarine, the *Nautilus*, and of Senator

Joseph McCarthy's televised hearings into the Communist infiltration of the United States Army. It was the year in which RCA introduced its Compatible Color TV, and in which the United States Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. It was the year that TV Dinners were nationally marketed for the first time, and that Carter-Wallace Laboratories gave the country its first tranquilizer, the Miltown. It was the year that the Muzak Corporation came into being. And it was the year that nineteen-year-old Elvis Presley made his first records, reworking country, rhythm-and-blues, and pop songs for Sam Phillips's little Sun label in Memphis. His final Sun record, "Mystery Train," released on September 1, 1955, hit Number 1 on the country charts. On November 26 Presley, who by then was under the general management of Tom Parker (one of those colonels who understood fried chicken), signed a three-year-plus-options contract with RCA-Victor. At his first RCA-Victor session, held in Nashville on January 5, 1956, Elvis recorded "Heartbreak Hotel." Released in February, "Heartbreak Hotel" quickly rose to the top of both the pop and the country charts; and at the end of the following month it crossed over to the R&B charts, where fifteen years before, in the days of the "Harlem Hit Parade," it had all begun.

Elvis may very well have been the most important figure in rock 'n' roll. But had it not been for those who came before him, there would have been no rock 'n' roll. It is primarily to those, the ones who came before, that I wanted to give homage in this book. Some of them were famous, some of them were not. Some of them were brilliant, some of them were fools. Many of them ended like Longfellow's Belisarius, begging for bread beneath the very arch of their triumphal march; others of them prevailed. Most of them made music as fine as any that has ever been heard. Furthermore, they made it first. In the context of their time—when tradition was still a force, and the mass media had not yet taken to propagating changing styles as a means of propagating themselves—a great many of these characters were far more shocking than the most diligently outrageous new rock acts of today. The grand illusion of newness is popular culture's greatest

sucker's-racket. To begin to see that there really is nothing new under the lucky old sun is to begin to understand the nature of popular culture and the business of fame. This is important. As the fellow in the *TV Guide* commercial says, watching television is becoming more complicated every day.

The chapters in this book, each of them devoted to a single artist or group, have been arranged to loosely follow the drift of time. I have begun with Jesse Stone, also known as Charles Calhoun, because his career has spanned much of the century, from minstrelsy to swing to rhythm and blues to present-day rock 'n' roll; and his story lends perspective. A chronology at the end of these chapters attempts to place the evolution of rock 'n' roll in its larger historical setting. Finally, a comprehensive discographical section serves to chronicle the recording careers of the various characters involved. These discographies can also be used as a guide to obtaining the actual music itself. They can even be read for the song titles alone, as a documentary of slang's (and sometimes subliteracy's) progress in modern America.

I spoke before of giving homage. This homage is not always of the most pious sort. Nor is my sense of history of the most orthodox variety. If I can live with these things, so can you, gentle reader. I have tried to have a little fun on the side here, and I hope that what I have written will be read by those more inclined to laugh than to flinch at a bit of license-taking, which, after all is said and done, really is what rock 'n' roll has always been about.

Jesse Stone

He Who Controls Rhythm

There is not much at the heart of Laurelton, New York: a grocery store, a beautician's shop, two storefront churches, and a tavern called Little T's Inn. The small black community that lies round it is one of tree-lined streets, modest one-family houses, and neatly trimmed patches of lawn. The trees are great and ancient; their roots have long ago unsettled the slate and concrete of the pavement. Their looming shadows and the lazy summer stillness of the streets are of another place, another time. Were it not for the intermittent sudden roarings of jet planes thundering to and from J.F.K. International Airport nearby, it would be easy to forget that Laurelton is only a half-hour's train ride from Manhattan.

"I've gotten used to it here," Jesse Stone said. It was August of 1983. We were sitting in the combined studio and office which he had set up years ago on the second floor of his home on Mentone Avenue. "It's going to be a hell of a job getting all this stuff packed. It took me all night just to gather up my books in those boxes." He pointed to the corrugated cardboard cartons on the floor. They had not yet been sealed. A paperback copy of Frederick Law Olmsted's *The Slave States* lay atop one of them. "My wife, Evvi, she's the one who's really set on moving to Florida. Those are her drums there." To the right of the drums there was an upright piano. A synthesizer, guitars, recording equipment, a small desk with a typewriter, filing cabinets, a 3-M copy machine, stacks of sheet music, and the couch on which we sat crowded the remaining space. "I've got another studio down-

stairs, in the basement. That's where I keep all my video equipment." An airplane passed low overhead, muffling his words; but he did not acknowledge it.

Jesse Stone was born in Atchison, Kansas, on November 16, 1901. His grandfather John had been owned by a white family named Stone in Tennessee. John had come to Kansas late in the last century, and he had done well. "He was something, man. He had the first Cadillac in Kansas. Bought it at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. He had me polishing the brass on it every Saturday morning."

Jesse's parents, Fred and Julia, were musicians, as were many of their relatives. "All my people were in show business—cousins, grandmothers, grandfathers. I was taught at home by my parents. I had an uncle who was interested in the classics. I got the ability to write songs from my mother, because she wrote songs. My father was a producer. He arranged the numbers for the minstrel shows that we had.

"I started singing when I was four. I had a dog act. The dogs were so well-trained they could do the act without me. They just made me look good. The first instrument I played was the violin."

In the 1920s Jesse traveled frequently to Kansas City, which lay but fifty miles southeast, on the other side of the Missouri River. "It was Prohibition, and Pendergast was running the whole town like an after-hours joint. It was not to be believed. Piney Brown was in with the Pendergast mob, he was what you might call their social director. There was a lot going on musically. I first ran into Joe Turner then, when he was just a kid." He paused, as if taken aback by the realization of how long ago those days were. "Joe's gone just about senile now, I think."

He also traveled upriver to St. Joseph which was almost as wide-open a place as Kansas City. "There was a colored Chinese fellow named Ching," Jesse recalled. "He was sort of the Piney Brown of St. Joe. Had a place called the Jazzland Café. He had concocted a non-alcoholic drink that got you drunk. It fermented in your stomach after you drank it. He made it in secret, down in the basement of the club. One of the ingredients was

Jesse Stone, c. 1954. (Courtesy of Jesse Stone)

prunes, I know that. The drink was called a Peacock. That was the big thing in St. Joe then for show-business people. Soon as they got to town, they'd go for a Peacock. It tasted something like strawberry soda, but not so sweet. The Goetz Brewery offered Ching a million dollars for his secret, but he wouldn't sell out."

By 1926 Jesse had a band called Jesse Stone and His Blue Serenaders. Under the management of Frank J. Rock, the group recorded Jesse's "Starvation Blues" for Okeh in April 1927, in St. Louis. Jesse worked as a pianist and arranger in Kansas City throughout the late twenties, taking part in Meritt and Brunswick recording sessions there in 1929 with Julia and George E. Lee, whose band he joined in 1928.

In the thirties he organized a bigger band and began to travel farther afield. Good fortune came in 1936, when Duke Ellington visited the Detroit club where Jesse Stone and his band were performing with an all-girl vocal group called the Rhythm Debs.

"Duke was the one who turned me loose. He brought us to

New York, got us booked into the Cotton Club. He gave me to Sidney Mills at Mills Music. Sidney signed me to Mills and booked me into theatres. Duke was having problems with his wife at the time, and he gave us his apartment at 2040 Seventh Avenue, paid and all, for about four months. It was quite a thing. We'd come from practically nothing out in the Midwest, and all of a sudden things were happening.

"I started working for the Apollo Theatre. This was right after it had been turned over from being a white burlesque house. I worked for Leonard Harper, staging shows, composing songs, writing jokes and routines and such for the comedians—Pigmeat Markham, Dusty Fletcher, Sam Theard. Acts came in, did a week, then they'd be gone. I filled in missing parts for musicians' arrangements. I'd add a trumpet part that was missing, a couple of saxes or something. When I started out at the Apollo, I was making $15 a week. By the time I left, I was making $300.

"I also played with my band at the Club Renaissance in Harlem on weekends. That's where Louis Jordan picked up on my style of singing. I was doin' arrangements for Chick Webb at the time, and Louis was playin' third alto in Chick's band. He asked Chick could he sing, and Chick said yeah. Louis said, 'Well, Jesse's gonna make a couple arrangements for me.' So I made the arrangements. He tried 'em out one night and he went over great. Chick didn't like that. He wouldn't call the tunes again after that. So Louis quit. I encouraged him, told him that if he wanted to sing, he should get away from Chick. He took my band, and they became the Elk's Rendezvous Band, the group on his first recordings."

Jesse did some recording work himself in the late thirties and early forties. He cut "Snaky Feeling" for Variety in 1937; he arranged at sessions for Jimmie Lunceford in 1939, for Harlan Leonard and His Rockets in 1940. But he was more concerned with songwriting.

"Cole Porter taught me a lot. He said to me, 'What tools do you use?' I didn't know what he was talking about. I had never even heard of a rhyming dictionary. I didn't know what a homonym was. I didn't know the difference between assonance and

alliteration. 'Tools?' I said. 'Hell,' he said, 'if you're gonna dig a ditch, you use a shovel, don't you?' I began to approach songwriting more professionally."

The first big hit that Jesse wrote was "Idaho." It was recorded by several bands in 1942, but Benny Goodman's version on Columbia was the one that ascended the pop charts that summer.

In early 1945 Jesse and his friend Herb Abramson got involved with National Records, the company that had recently been started in New York by Al Greene. "We thought Greene wasn't handling it right. He had a lot of great black talent under contract—Billy Eckstine, the Ravens, and so forth—but he wasn't doing much with them. Herb and I came up with the idea of starting a record company of our own. We figured we could do what a guy like Greene wasn't doing. The only trouble was, Herb Abramson didn't have any money, neither did I. Then, finally, Herb ran into Ahmet Ertegun. Ahmet had money. That was the beginning of Atlantic Records.

"When Atlantic first started, at the end of 1947, we were trying to do jazz. The jazz didn't sell. We tried to analyze what was wrong. We eventually made a trip down South, Ahmet, Herb, and myself. We found out that our music wasn't right because it wasn't danceable. The kids were lookin' for something to dance to. I listened to the stuff that was being done by those thrown-together bands in the joints down there, and I concluded that the only thing that was missin' from the stuff we were recording was the rhythm. All we needed was a bass-line. So I designed a bass-pattern, and it sort of became identified with rock 'n' roll—doo, da-*doo, dum*; doo, da-*doo, dum*—that thing. I'm the guilty person that started that.

"When we started puttin' that sound out on Atlantic, we started sellin' like hotcakes. The first record we used it on was 'Cole Slaw' by Frank Culley, the sax player. He came to Atlantic one day with a song he claimed to have written. It turned out to be a song called 'Sorghum Switch' that I had written when I was a staff writer at Mills. Jimmy Dorsey had recorded it in 1942. From wherever Culley had picked it up, he had gotten the title wrong. He called it 'Sergeant.' Anyway, we let him record it for

Atlantic. I changed the name of the song to 'Cole Slaw' and gave it a new arrangement."

Culley recorded the song, at Apex in New York, in January 1949. (He had played alto sax the month before on Wynonie Harris's recording of "Grandma Plays the Numbers," across the river in Linden, New Jersey.) It hit the R&B charts in early May, followed by the more successful cover of it by Jesse's old friend Louis Jordan. Jesse himself recorded the song that April for Victor in New York.

"The first big seller we had with the new sound was Ruth Brown, who we'd found in Philadelphia. After 1949 the hits just kept coming."

Jesse's contributions to the immense success of Atlantic Records were inestimable. Charlie Gillett, the British author of *Making Tracks*, a history of Atlantic published in 1974, was told by Ahmet Ertegun that "Jesse Stone did more to develop the basic rock-'n'-roll sound than anybody else." Throughout the early fifties, Jesse wrote and arranged many of Atlantic's biggest and best hits: "Money Honey" by the Drifters (1953), "It Should Have Been Me" by Ray Charles (1954), "Your Cash Ain't Nothin' but Trash" by the Clovers (1954). Greatest of all was the song he wrote for his old friend from Kansas City, Big Joe Turner.

"In January or February 1954, Herb Abramson said to me, 'We got Joe Turner comin' in to record and we need an uptempo blues for a change.' I threw a bunch of phonetic phrases together—'shake, rattle, and roll,' 'flip, flop, and fly'—and I came up with thirty or forty verses. Then I picked over them. I got the line about 'a one-eyed cat peepin' in a seafood store' from my drummer, Baby Lovett. He was always comin' out with lines like that."

"Shake, Rattle and Roll" was a perfect record. Its lyrics were lascivious, but not quite dirty enough to stop it from getting airplay. Joe Turner had rarely sung better. Sam Taylor's tenor-sax solo was glorious. Released in early April, it stayed high on the R&B charts for close to seven months.

Like many of the other songs Jesse wrote that year, "Shake, Rattle and Roll" was copyrighted under the name of Charles E.

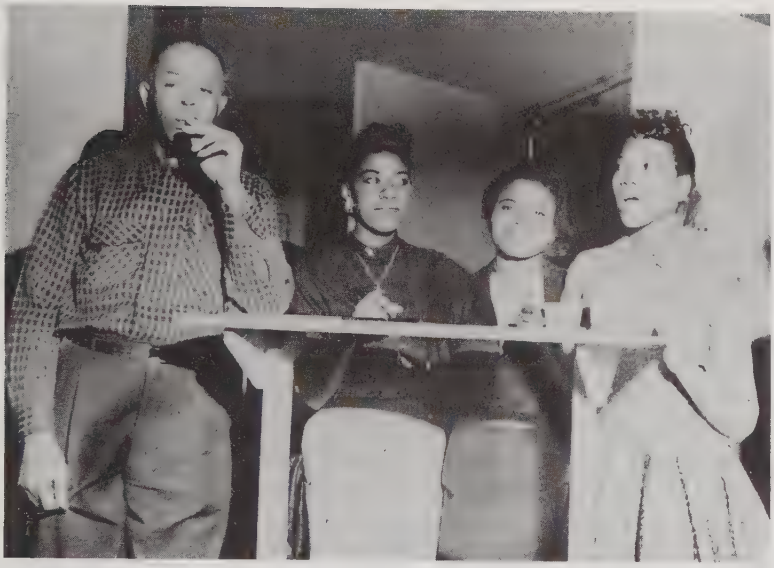
Calhoun. "I was trying to belong to both of the performing societies, ASCAP and BMI," he explained. "I had just bought a home in Hempstead. The guy who had built the house, his name was Charles Calhoun. I had the contract for the house in my hands when Ahmet was sayin', 'You gotta pick up another name to put on these tunes.' I looked down and there it was: Charles Calhoun." (Jesse not only wrote songs under this assumed name; he eventually recorded under it as well—for MGM in 1955, for Groove and Atlantic in 1956).

When Ed Mesner opened the New York office of his Los Angeles–based Aladdin Records in the summer of 1954, he recruited Jesse to run the company's new Lamp subsidiary. Jesse continued to work with Atlantic at the same time, but his relationship with the company was slowly beginning to dissolve.

"Ahmet was good to me. He'd say, 'You're not charging enough,' and he'd write out a figure and say, 'This is what you should get. If you don't get it, the government will.' But I was after a piece of the company, and I could never pin them down to giving it to me. They kept offering me a lifetime job, but I didn't want that. I wanted a piece."

Mesner's New York Aladdin office did not last long. Aladdin itself was starting to fall in 1956, despite the success of the label's last hit act, Shirley and Lee. "Ed Mesner owed me a bunch of money when he closed the office. He gave me all the furniture and office supplies in lieu of my back pay. That was the furniture we used—Hal Fein, Charles Singleton, and I—when we started Roosevelt Music.

"Fein had been at Mills with me. Roosevelt Music was his idea. We knew a bunch of black writers who were having trouble with white publishers. They were writing rock 'n' roll songs, and the old, established publishers weren't taking care of them. We gathered those writers together. We gave each of them his own satellite company. It worked like this. The mother company, Roosevelt, got the first pick of each batch of songs the writer came up with. The second choice went to the writer's company. The next, back to the mother company, and so on, with each batch of songs. The writers' satellite companies were named after



Jesse Stone, with the Cookies (the future Raylettes), c. 1955. (Courtesy of Jesse Stone)

presidents, too. Our first big hit was probably one of Otis Blackwell's songs, one of his that Elvis Presley recorded."

The twenty years since his arrival in New York had been busy ones. The twenty years before that had been something, too. As he approached sixty, Jesse Stone began to look back. He had gone from minstrel shows to swing bands to rock 'n' roll; from holding up a cooper's hoop for a trained mongrel to jump through to producing shows for the Apollo to selling songs to Elvis Presley; from drinking Piney Brown's bootleg scotch and Ching's Peacocks to smoking Cab Calloway's reefer to drinking Ahmet Ertegun's champagne. At least he had a few bucks to show for it all.

"I decided to retire. I moved out to California to take it easy. I laid on the beach listening to ball games for about a year. Some guy came looking for me one day, told me that he was snowed under with the Twist craze, asked me if I would help him out with a few arrangements.

"I didn't know it then, but that was the end of my retirement. Before I knew it, I was doing stuff for all sorts of Hollywood

people, Ann-Margret and them. I ended up at Frank Sinatra's new company, Reprise, in 1961.

"A bunch of gangsters from Chicago offered me a job running a record company there. I turned them down. They made another offer. I turned them down again. They kept raising the price. Eventually it was too good to refuse. So I moved to Chicago.

"These guys weren't interested in recording. They just wanted a front. They had the top floor of the Playboy Building. They fixed me up in the most lavish, elaborate office that I had ever seen. I said, 'I don't need all this room.'—*'Don't worry about it.'* They would come in and hang around in the morning, overseeing all the booking action that was being done on the telephones. Then, after lunch, at one o'clock, the place turned into a recording company. It was Roy Love, Huddie, and those guys. Huddie at that time was the big boss of the whole North Side. The record company, Randy Records, was named after his grandkid.

"It was a mess. These guys were bringin' in whatever chicks they were involved with, Playboy bunnies, whatever, to make records. They would just feed these chicks some line and send 'em to me. None of them could sing.

"One day I said, 'The reason the records ain't selling is we're not getting any publicity. I need to send out some press releases.' They said, 'OK, we'll get you a printin' press.' I figured they'd get me one of those little things you set on a table and turn the handle. No. They got me a $30,000 A. B. Dick multicolor lithograph press. It came to the building on a big truck. 'I don't know how to work this thing!'—*'Don't worry about it.'* It was crazy.

"They were giving me plenty of money. *Plenty* of money. But I became frightened. They blew a guy away on the East Side, some guy they'd put in as alderman or something, and he'd double-crossed them. And they'd have business meetings in my office, and I'd hear them talking: 'Did you see the expression on that guy's face when I told him that this was his last day?'—this is what I would hear; they'd be talking about it like they were discussin' a poker game—'He's lookin' in the muzzle and his eyes are gettin' bigger and bigger, and I blow him away.' That

sort of thing was getting to me. I figured, uh-oh, I gotta get out of here.

"I slowly turned the operation over to Huddie's son, Lenny Loveman. He'd been thrown out of a bunch of colleges, and they didn't know what to do with him. I put him in charge of the record company. They were really appreciative. They gave me $24,000, and I cut out of there. I told them I was going back to New York, but I really went to Englewood, New Jersey. I thought they might come looking for me. One day I got a call at Roosevelt Music; guy on the line said, 'Anything you ever need, you just let us know. We'll be right there.'"

While Jesse was working in Chicago, he recorded several piano concertos for RCA. He regrets that they have never been released. "I still compose some classical pieces occasionally. I've listened to Bach all my life. Bartók, Stravinsky, they're my main modern men. I've had a lot more luck with my rock 'n' roll than with my concertos, that's for sure," he laughed. "You can't do it all, I guess."

Jesse figured that he would be settled in down in Florida by December. He would be eighty-two then.

I asked him if this move was another attempt to retire.

"Oh, I don't know. They have a lot of clubs down there in Orlando, where we're moving. My wife's twenty years younger than I am, and she still enjoys performing. We'll probably play a few clubs together.

"What I really want to get more involved in is this video stuff." His eyes glimmered, and he did not look at all like a man who could have had a trained-dog act in 1905. "I've been watching a lot of that rock-'n'-roll video, taking a good look at it. The way I see it, those kids are too bogged down in that montage stuff. The way it is now, it's nothing but montage. It's getting old already. I've got a few ideas I want to work on. We'll see what happens."

He slowly rose and smiled, then bent to tuck in *The Slave States*. We left the room and walked to the floor below.

"One thing I won't miss about this house is the damned stairs," he said.

Big Joe Turner

Steak for Breakfast, Gal Meat on a Rainy Day

The blues, country music, and their bastard prodigal child, rock 'n' roll, have a very basic and pervasive thing in common: stupidity. They are, in the main, more the music of folly than of wisdom.

It's hard to decide who are the more ridiculous, the sensitive assholes or the make-believe hard guys. Here's Willie Nelson, starry-eyed in Judy Garland pigtails at the age of fifty-seven; Tracy Chapman, a Hallmark poet trapped in the body of Buckwheat. There's Billy Idol, who couldn't scare his beautician's poodle, trying to act menacing. And they're all in earnest, which only renders them all the funnier.

Those few—such as Robert Johnson, Hank Williams, and Jim Morrison—who did make from their dark attrition a music of no mean power, a poetry, really; those few, in a way, were even more stupid than the rest, because they killed themselves when they could have been walking their schnauzers instead. They figured out the racket, then bet the action rather than booked it. Their words were beautiful, but their voices were scared.

All in the way of bringing us—you and me, pal, in our mutual quest for worthless knowledge—to the not unworthy matter of a noble and mighty man named Big Joe Turner, the rock-'n'-roll patriarch who out-lived and out-rocked them all. Never did he sing scared, never did he appear in public wearing pigtails or a chartreuse codpiece. His voice, oceanic and commanding, resonant with that rumbling deep down in the ground which is the sound of the Devil chaining his third wife down, is a voice of

power. Not in all of rock 'n' roll has there been another singer quite like him.

He wasn't always the big fat fuck that he became in later years. His mother, who gave birth to him on May 18, 1911, in Kansas City, Missouri, gave him the rightful name of Joseph Vernon Tucker. His hometown was, in the Prohibition years of his youth, one of the most wide-open cities in the Midwest, second in notoriety only to Chicago. Booze, broads, and dice were plentiful, and so were the legendary musicians who lived in Kansas City, or passed through it, in the late 1920s and early 1930s: Count Basie, Mary Lou Williams, Lester Young, and the rest. Most important of all to young Joe Turner was the boogie-woogie piano-player Pete Johnson.

Turner's father was killed in an automobile crash when Joe was fifteen. To help support his mother, his sister, Katie, and himself, Turner shined shoes, hawked newspapers, and worked as a breakfast cook in a hotel. It was a year or so after his father's death that he began hanging around the Backbiters' Club on Independence Avenue, where Pete Johnson performed nightly. Turner, whose only previous singing had been done in the streets, asked the pianist if he could join in. Johnson liked what he heard, and in 1929 Pete Johnson and eighteen-year-old Joe Turner became a team.

They moved from the Backbiters' Club to the Black and Tan. Turner's job consisted not only of singing with Johnson, but also of tending bar and making runs for the bootleg whiskey the club sold. In 1933, when Prohibition ended, Johnson and Turner moved to the Cherry Blossom, which was located at the celebrated corner of Twelfth Street and Vine (an intersection which no longer exists, by the way). They worked there for nearly three years. In 1936 they left Kansas City, traveling to Chicago, St. Louis, and Omaha. Back home, they began working at Piney Brown's joint, the Sunset Club. It was at the Sunset Club that John Hammond, searching the town for new talent, heard Johnson and Turner perform. Hammond brought them to New York, hiring them for his big "Spirituals to Swing" concert at Carnegie Hall on Christmas Eve in 1938.

Big Joe and his Packard, after the war. (Courtesy of Jonas Bernholm)

Turner and Johnson stayed awhile in New York. A few days after the Carnegie Hall show, on December 30, they cut their first record, for Vocalion: "Goin' Away Blues" and the Johnson composition that had become their signature song in the Kansas City clubs, "Roll 'Em, Pete." They went back to Kansas City in August, playing at the Lone Star Club; but their hometown, as fine as it was, could no longer contain them. They were back in New York by June 1939, when they made some more records for Vocalion. This time they recorded with a full band—Hot Lips Page on the trumpet, Henry Smith on the alto sax, Eddie Dougherty on the drums, Laurence Lucie on the guitar, Abe Bolar on the bass—under the name of Pete Johnson and His Boogie Woogie Boys. Their classic version of "Cherry Red" came out of this session.

Turner and Johnson continued to perform together for several years, most notably at Café Society, a fashionable mob joint

fronted by Barney Josephson in Greenwich Village. (Opened by Josephson in the basement at 2 Sheridan Square in December 1938—Billie Holiday was the club's opening show—Café Society was the first integrated nightclub in New York.) But their recording careers began to diverge as Turner, throughout the 1940s, veered more and more towards that style that eventually would be known as rock 'n' roll.

On January 15, 1940, he recorded "How Long, How Long Blues" and "Shake It and Break It" with the Varsity Seven—the Varsity Records band led by Benny Carter and Coleman Hawkins. A few weeks later, on February 9, he cut two sides for Vocalion with pianist Joe Sullivan and His Café Society Orchestra. On October 15, for Okeh, he recorded "Joe Turner Blues" and "Beale Street Blues" with Benny Carter and His All-Star Orchestra. On November 11, with Pete Johnson, Hot Lips Page, and others, he cut his amazing "Piney Brown Blues," released the following year as by Joe Turner and His Fly Cats in the Decca album *Kansas City Jazz*.

He remained with Decca for four years. On November 26, he cut four sides accompanied by pianist Willie "The Lion" Smith. On January 21, 1941, he recorded with Art Tatum and His Band. The first song cut that day became one of Joe Turner's most well-known pieces, "Wee Baby Blues." After a second session with Tatum, on June 13—and all four sides which were done that day were remarkable: "Lucille," "Rock Me, Mama," "Corrine, Corrina," and "Lonesome Graveyard"—Turner recorded again three days later, and again the music was remarkable: "Somebody Got to Go," Louis Jordan's "Ice Man," "Chewed Up Grass," and "Nobody in Mind," with its wonderfully delivered lyric, "I'll cut your head, just like I'd cut a block of wood." Turner left New York for Los Angeles, where he joined up with Duke Ellington in the production of the revue *Jump for Joy* at the Mayan Theatre. Back in New York the following summer, he resumed making records for Decca. By this time, the thirty-year-old singer was being billed as Big Joe Turner; and big he was.

On September 8, 1941, he recorded for the first time in Los

Angeles, accompanied by Freddie Slack, the leader of the new wave of boogie-woogie piano-players. "Rocks in My Bed" and "Blues on Central Avenue" both came out of that session. He recorded with the Freddie Slack Trio again, on January 28, 1942. The national recording ban imposed that year by James Caesar Petrillo, president of the American Federation of Musicians—Petrillo wanted to thwart what he called "the menace of mechanical music"—prevented Turner (and most other singers) from recording until November 13, 1944, when the ban was ended. Two days after that date, in Chicago, Turner made his last records for Decca, backed by a trio led by Pete Johnson.

He began recording for National on February 2, 1945, and was again accompanied by Johnson. For his second National session, on January 23, 1946, in Los Angeles (where he and Johnson had now opened their own joint, the Blue Room Club), Turner assembled an outstanding group of musicians, including Bill Moore on the tenor sax, Teddy Bunn on the guitar, and John "Shifty" Henry, the author of Amos Milburn's immortal hit "Let Me Go Home, Whiskey," on the bass. "My Gal's a Jockey" c/w "I Got Love for Sale," one of the singles to come out of this session, was one of the sensational records of the summer of 1946.

Turner recorded for National through 1947. In July of that year, he cut a two-sided "Battle of the Blues" with Wynonie Harris, for Aladdin. At the end of the year, he and Pete Johnson made a single for the little Stag label of San Francisco, where they had taken a job at the Memo Cocktail Lounge. In the summer of 1948 they cut four singles for Down Beat, including "Wine-O-Baby" and "Old Piney Brown Is Gone."

When MGM inaugurated its Ebony Series that summer, Turner did five singles for the label. There followed two singles for Aladdin, two with Dootsie Williams for his DooTone label (these singles were not released, however, for several years), two for RPM, and one—a very hot one, "Please Don't Talk Me to Death"—for Modern. In January 1949 he sang on two Excelsior sides by the Lorenzo Flennoy Trio. Later that year, in Houston, he cut five singles for the Freedom label. In 1950 he made two records in New Orleans for the recently formed Imperial label,

In Chicago, with trumpeter King Kolaz's band.
(Courtesy of Jonas Bernholm)

accompanied by Dave Bartholomew's Orchestra. Before heading north, he cut one single for the little Bayou company.

By 1951, Joe Turner had had more than fifty singles on the market. Through all of them there were discernible a steady maturation of his powers and an ever-increasing distinction of the style he had begun to cultivate in 1939-40. With every singing of "Nobody in Mind," the lines about the head and the block of wood seemed more credible; and nobody made fun of his gut. From here on in, Big Joe's style would not really change. It was only a matter of the world catching up with him.

In April 1951, a few weeks before his fortieth birthday, Turner sang with Count Basie's band at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem. After this engagement, he was offered a three-year contract by

Atlantic Records, and he signed it. Atlantic wasted no time. Turner went into Apex Studios on April 19, and a single was released less than two weeks later.

Turner's last hit record, the Freedom single "Still in the Dark," had been a modest one, spending but a week near the bottom of the R&B charts in March 1950. "Chains of Love," his first Atlantic single, hit the R&B charts in June and remained on the charts for six months, rising to Number 2. More hits followed: "Sweet Sixteen" in 1952, "Honey Hush" and "TV Mama" in 1953. Then, on February 9, 1954, Big Joe Turner cut the record that was to be his laurel crown: "Shake, Rattle and Roll," written for Turner by Jesse Stone (under his pseudonym Charles E. Calhoun).

Released in April, "Shake, Rattle and Roll" spent almost seven months on the R&B charts. Though it never hit Number 1 (the Midnighters' "Work With Me, Annie" could not be overcome), it stood, and yet stands, as one of the true glories of that glorious year, 1954, which was the summit of the golden age of rock 'n' roll.

There were other, lesser hits during the next couple of years: "Flip, Flop and Fly" (the follow-up to "Shake, Rattle and Roll") and "Hide and Seek" in 1955; "Morning, Noon and Night," "Corrine, Corrina" (which crossed over to become a modest pop hit), "Rock a While," and "Lipstick, Powder and Paint" in 1956. There was a feature film appearance, in American International's 1956 *Shake, Rattle and Rock*. Now that white people had gotten wise to the term "rock 'n' roll," Big Joe Turner, at the age of forty-five, was a rock-'n'-roll star.

"It wasn't but a different name for the same music I been singing all my life," Turner later explained in Whitney Balliett's superb *New Yorker* portrait of him. Turner went on singing that same music. He continued to record for Atlantic until February 1961. In 1963-64 he made a couple of singles for Coral. By then, of course, hardly anyone wanted to hear the real stuff, and hardly anyone recognized Big Joe Turner's name. This didn't much bother Turner, except financially. He had rarely even cared to look into his audiences' eyes.

Exorcism and the devil in nylon hose. (Courtesy of Jonas Bernholm)

Big Joe Turner continued to make records into the 1980s, for small jazz labels such as Pablo; and he continued to perform, at clubs such as Tramps in New York. Pete Johnson was dead now, and so was Turner's main wife, Lou Willie. (There were others —"Whatever money I've made, the wives about got it all"—but Lou Willie, to whom he was married from 1945 until her death in 1972, was the dark lady of the flip sides.) Big Joe Turner, however, belonged to the living. In his seventies, he could still be heard and beheld, banging the butt of his cane on the hard barroom floor, clearer than the signal of any newfangled, silly-ass MTV, telling *das Ewig-Weibliche* all about that block of wood, and exhorting that devil in nylon hose to get out of that bed, wash her face and hands, get into that kitchen, make some noise with the pots and pans.

Survival is not the point. Any bum can survive. The trick is to survive as a big fat fuck. For Big Joe, the end came in Los Angeles, from kidney failure, on November 24, 1985. He was seventy-four.

Nat King Cole

Beyond Pink Cadillacs

The name of Nat King Cole has been written large in the annals of popular music. Most of us who recognize that name, however, associate it only with the sort of sophisticated romantic ballads by means of which Cole's fame and fortune were derived and maintained. Unjustly ignored and forgotten is the music that Nat Cole made before his establishment. In those years before he was swallowed up by the mainstream, Cole succeeded in creating a sound that popular music has built upon ever since. He did not merely electrify the blues (that would be done later, by displaced deep-South bluesmen such as Muddy Waters); he transformed them. Drawing from jazz, he remade the blues into a thing of his own time and place. Though possessing all the ineffable forlorn wisdom of the old blues, Cole's music also embodied the sophistication and street-smart savoir faire that was burgeoning close to both sides of the tracks in New York and Los Angeles in the early forties. Understated and subtle, but never simple or coy, Cole's small-group sound became the standard of cool. It was, plainly, the main influence on those younger and wilder singing piano-players—Amos Milburn, Charles Brown, Cecil Gant, Ray Charles, and others—who led the first great wave of West Coast rock 'n' roll in the mid-forties. Lending urbanity, class, and, most important of all, accessibility to the blues, Cole was the link between the old and the new, the dungarees and the sharkskin britches.

He was born Nathaniel Adams Coles, on St. Patrick's Day, 1919, in Montgomery, Alabama. When he was four, his family—

three brothers, a sister; his mother, Perlina; his father, the Reverend Edward Coles—moved to the South Side of Chicago. The Reverend was a strict, industrious man (he eventually became the pastor of the First Baptist Church of North Chicago, a position which he held until his death in 1965). Discerning Nat's musical leanings, he steered him towards playing church organ at a young age. The boy's true love, though, was not the Holy Ghost's greatest hits, but rather the smoothly vulgar music of Earl Hines.

While attending Wendell Phillips High School, he and his brother Eddie, who sang and played bass, started a band called the Rogues of Rhythm. They made $18 a week playing at the Panama Club on 58th Street, where nobody seemed to notice that the Coles boys were lifting their arrangements almost chord for chord from Earl Hines's records.

Changing the name of the six-man band to Eddie Cole's Solid Swingers, the group recorded four sides for Decca on July 28, 1936, only a few weeks after Nat had graduated from Wendell Phillips High. He didn't sing in those days, he just played the piano.

After the two Decca releases sank unnoticed, Nat joined the Chicago troupe of a musical revue called *Shuffle Along*. Becoming enamored with a pair of legs that danced in the show's line, he went west with the show in 1937. *Shuffle Along* folded abruptly in Long Beach when an enterprising member of the cast made off with $800 in receipts; but it didn't much matter to eighteen-year-old Nathaniel Coles. He married that pair of legs, which belonged to one Nadine Robinson, and moved to Los Angeles. He dropped the "s" from his surname, adopted the sobriquet "King" (it's amazing what a pair of legs can do for a young man's ego), and, recruiting guitarist Oscar Moore (1912–81) and bass-player Wesley Prince, formed the King Cole Trio, which found steady work at the Swanee Inn. Though legend has it that it was at the Swanee Inn that drunken customers persuaded Cole to sing for the first time, he was already singing by this time. That first time had happened in New York, at Kelly's Stables on Fifty-second Street, one night when the scheduled singer he was

to accompany—Billie Holiday—didn't show up. Cole also sang, along with vocalist Maxine Johnson, on unreleased recordings made in Los Angeles in the summer of 1938.

The group, under the name of the King Cole Swingsters, made four recordings in early 1939 for the obscure Los Angeles label of Davis & Schwegler. (Located on West Seventh Street, Davis & Schewgler specialized in ten-, twelve-, and sixteen-inch transcriptions of what was advertised as "tax-free music.") On two of these, especially "There's No Anesthetic for Love" and "Riffin' at the Barbecue," Cole's style could be heard coming fully into its own. In December of that year, the King Cole Trio (plus a drummer) recorded again, with Louisiana-born producer Leon René. The best of these cuts, "I Like to Riff," released by Ammor and Varsity in New York, and later by Excelsior (run by René's older brother, Otis), was a wild inkling of rock 'n' roll to come. By December 6 of the following year, when the King Cole Trio recorded for Decca (in the interim, Cole and Moore worked at a few of Lionel Hampton's Victor sessions), Cole's style, wry and cocky and cool, had become a recognizable watermark.

It was his gravelly, sagacious vocal on the King Cole Trio's first Decca release, a version of the 1928 hit "Sweet Lorraine," that led to its becoming one of the underground sensations of 1940. Though most of them did not sell, the King Cole Trio's subsequent Decca records—"Honeysuckle Rose," "Scotchin' with the Soda," "Call the Police," "Hit That Jive, Jack," and others—were consummate in their art and seminal in their effluence.

Cole traveled east to New York, where on October 22, 1941, the King Cole Trio's last Decca session was held. (Out of this session came Cole's first hit, "That Ain't Right," which became one of the best-selling race records of 1942.) The following month, the group made two records for the small Ammor label as the King Cole Quartet, having for the moment brought in the drummer Lee Young. Remaining in New York through 1942, Cole and Moore, joined by tenor saxophonist Illinois Jacquet, trumpeter Lester Collins, and bass-player Gene Englund, recorded a pair of records for Disc under the name of the King Cole Quintet.

Back in Los Angeles at the start of 1943, the King Cole Trio, with Johnny Miller replacing Wesley Prince on the bass, began playing regularly at the 331 Club. The group made a couple of records for Excelsior early in the year. One of these, "All for You," followed "That Ain't Right" onto the race charts. In the summer, Cole did his first movie work, performing in the Republic features *Here Comes Elmer* and *Pistol Packin' Mama*.

Spring 1946. (Courtesy of Capitol Records)

(These movies, like most of the others mentioned in this book, have been relegated to the dimmest archival sub-basement of film history. During the forties, hastily made musical films, ranging in length from one to eight reels, were churned out in great numbers. These shorts and second features were made and distributed to coincide with current hit records. Films were used as an adjunct to the recording industry, much the same as videocassettes are today. In fact, in the early forties, a phenomenon equivalent to MTV was all the rage—"movie jukeboxes" that played three-minute Soundies of current hits in "live" performance.)

On November 2, between the releases of those films, the King Cole Trio cut two records for Premier. The second of these Premier releases, "Got a Penny," was uncanny in its foreshadowing of rock-'n'-roll things to come. (On the same day when these recordings were made, Oscar Moore cut a record for Premier with his brother and fellow guitarist, Johnny, and singer Charles Brown. This record, "Tell Me You'll Wait for Me," was the beginning of Johnny Moore's Three Blazers, one of the most important of the West Coast's early rock-'n'-roll bands. In a little while, Charles Brown, who paid close attention that day as "Got a Penny" was being cut, would take up on the piano where Nat King Cole would leave off. [And, moving here into full-blown tangential bracketdom, the flip side of that Blazers record, "Melancholy Madeline" by Oscar Moore and the Three Blazers (after all, what are brothers for?), featured as its vocalist not Charles Brown but Frankie Laine in his recording debut. How he got there, I do not know; and these brackets and parentheses are beginning to frighten me; so let's move on, into a more well-lighted paragraph.])

Eight days after the Premier session occurred the most momentous turn in Nat King Cole's career since that night in 1940 when Billie Holiday's no-show had instigated him to sing. Glenn E. Wallichs, vice-president of the new Capitol label, caught the King Cole Trio's show at the 331 Club, and signed him on November 10, 1943. Two weeks later, on November 30, the King Cole Trio went into the studio. The very first song they cut

for Capitol, a Cole original titled "Straighten Up and Fly Right," became a national pop hit, rising to Number 9 on the pop charts in June 1944. (In the meantime, Capitol had purchased and reissued the Excelsior sides "All for You" and "Vom Vim Veedle.") By then Cole had made his third and fourth movie appearances, in 20th Century-Fox's *Pin-Up Girl* and Columbia's *Stars On Parade*, both of which were in the theatres as "Straighten Up and Fly Right" was in the air.

Ironically, but not surprisingly, Cole's first crossover hit marked the end of his contributions to the birthing of rock 'n' roll. To be sure, there were after "Straighten Up and Fly Right" a great many fine Nat King Cole records—"I'm a Shy Guy" (1945), "(Get Your Kicks On) Route 66" (1946), "She's My Buddy's Chick" (1946), "The Geek" (an instrumental inspired by the movie *Nightmare Alley*; 1948), and so forth, clear through to the astounding version of "Wee Baby Blues" that he made with Count Basie's orchestra in June 1958—and Cole remained until the end a stylist in a class by himself. But in 1944 he passed the torch along and settled back to enjoy the desserts of his decade-long upwards toiling. There were baseball games to watch, Philip Morrises to chain-smoke. Life was good.

He appeared in more movies: Columbia's *Swing in the Saddle* (1944), Universal's *See My Lawyer* (1944), United Artist's *Breakfast in Hollywood* (1946), All American News' *Killer Diller* (1947). He had more and bigger hits: "(I Love You) For Sentimental Reasons" reached Number 1 on the pop charts during the 1947 Christmas season; "Nature Boy" was the all-round best-selling record of 1948.

That was Nat King Cole's year, 1948. Having been divorced the year before by the pair of legs that he had followed west and wed in 1937, Cole had taken up with a lovely lady named Maria Ellington, who had sung with, but was not related to, Duke. On Easter Sunday, 1948, a few days after "Nature Boy" was released, Nat and Maria were married at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, in a ceremony performed by Pastor Adam Clayton Powell. This $20,000 wedding was, in the words of *Ebony* magazine (in an issue whose cover was shared by "The Nat 'King'

Cole Nobody Knows" and the news that "Pills Can Change the Color of Skin"), "the second largest in Harlem history." (The biggest was that of the hair-straightener queen Mme. C. J. Walker's granddaughter, in 1923.) Honeymooning in Mexico, Cole received a call from Capitol telling him that "Nature Boy" was breaking all sales records. By the time he and Maria returned home, to a Tudor mansion that Cole had bought in the exclusive Hancock Park suburb of Los Angeles, "Nature Boy" was climbing high on both the pop and race charts. Furthermore, he found that he was being honored as Man of the Year by the Elegant Negro Men's Club of Huspo. He inserted another Philip Morris in his three-inch cigarette-holder, lit it, and leaned back with great satisfaction.

The hits continued to come, though his albums began to do better than his singles. His first album, *The King Cole Trio*, released in early 1945, had been the very first 78-rpm set to hit Number 1 on *Billboard*'s new album charts. One of these, *Ramblin' Rose* (1962), remained on the LP charts for an astounding 162 weeks. (And people ten years later thought that Carole King's *Tapestry* was a big deal.) There were more movies: *Make Believe Ballroom* (Columbia, 1949); the Universal musical featurettes *Nat "King" Cole* (1951), *Nat "King" Cole and Joe Adams' Orchestra* (1952), and *Nat "King" Cole and Russ Morgan's Orchestra* (1953); *Small Town Girl* (MGM, 1953); *The Blue Gardenia* (Warner Bros., 1953); *The Nat "King" Cole Musical Story* (narrated by, of all people, Jeff Chandler; Universal, 1955); *Istanbul* (Universal, 1956); Sam Fuller's Vietnamese war story, *China Gate*, in which Cole played his first dramatic role (20th Century-Fox, 1957); *St. Louis Blues*, in which Cole played W. C. Handy, who died two weeks before the movie's premiere (Paramount, 1958); *Night of the Quarter Moon* (MGM, 1959); and *Cat Ballou* (Columbia, 1965).

But it wasn't always easy. Nat King Cole came to know what Lou Costello already knew, that life was a bitch, and the quest for peace a three-card monte game.

The Feds swooped down on him for back taxes, seizing his mansion in March 1951, just as his last Number 1 hit, "Too

(Courtesy of KICKS)

Young," was being released. On April 10, 1956, he tried to give a performance in his home state, at the Birmingham Muncipal Auditorium (where, eight years later, on July 1, 1964, Jerry Lee Lewis recorded the best live rock-'n'-roll album ever made). "NAT KING COLE BEATEN ON ALA. STAGE; JAIL 3" was

the *Daily News* headline on the following day. A group of men, followers of Asa Carter's anti-black, anti-rock-'n'-roll North Alabama White Citizens Council, had, in the wrath of their impotence, charged the stage and ganged up on the singer that their less politically correct fellow Alabamians had paid to see and hear. (It is to be regretted that Yoko Ono had not yet come on the scene to inform them and us that woman is the nigger of the world.) A few months later, on November 5, 1956, NBC began broadcasting *The Nat "King" Cole Show*. But, in spite of enthusiastic critical response, no national sponsor was willing to underwrite the show, for fear of boycotting; and, in December 1957, it was shut down. "O.K. for T.V." he had sung in 1951; and so it was.

He kept playing, here and abroad. Behind him were guitarist John Collins (Oscar Moore had left long ago, in 1947, to join his brother's Blazers), bass-player Charles Harris (Johnny Miller had left in 1949), and drummer Lee Young, who had recorded with Cole back in the lean days of 1941. In June 1961 he resigned for another ten years with Capitol. He came through the following year with the *Ramblin' Rose* album, and in 1963 with his last Top Ten hit, "Those Lazy-Hazy-Crazy Days of Summer."

It was late the next year when he got that call from Philip Morris. Canceling an engagement at the Sands in Las Vegas, he entered St. John's Hospital in Santa Monica on December 8. On January 25, a week before his father's death in Chicago, his left lung was removed. At 5:30 on the morning of February 15, 1965, a month shy of his forth-sixty birthday, Nat King Cole died. A few days later, he was put to rest in Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Glendale. Sinatra showed up in a long black limousine.

Louis Jordan

Hep and the Art of Alto Sax Repair

In the 1940s there were two black swingers who crossed over from the race charts (as *Billboard* called its bluegum charts until 1949, when the phrase rhythm & blues was adopted) to the pop charts. Nat King Cole, the more successful of the two singers, was eventually swallowed by the tamer, white music. One of the most inventive West Coast R&B singers of the early forties, by the year of his death, 1965, Cole had been reduced to singing "The Ballad of Cat Ballou" with Stubby Kaye. The other singer was a man named Louis Jordan. Although he is largely forgotten today, Jordan did more to define hep and to prepare white folks for the coming of rock 'n' roll than any other man of that era.

Louis Jordan was born on July 8, 1908, in Brinkley, Arkansas, a small town halfway between Little Rock and Memphis. At the age of twelve, he ran away from home and joined Ma and Pa Rainey's Rabbit Foot Minstrels. He toured with the legendary troupe for two seasons, then returned to Arkansas. Jordan's family moved to Philadelphia in 1930, and it was there that he joined the band of trumpet-player Charlie Gaines. He made the move to New York playing with Leroy Smith, then Kaiser Marshall. In 1936 he began playing alto saxophone in Chick Webb's band, and on October 29 of that year he cut his first record, blowing almost indiscernibly behind Webb's vocalist Ella Fitzgerald. On January 15, 1937, Webb allowed Jordan to sing on record for the first time, on a song called "Gee, but You're Swell."

In 1938 Jordan left Webb's band and formed his own six-piece

group. They played at the Elk's Rendezvous Lounge, a small joint in Harlem, and soon became known as Louis Jordan's Elk's Rendezvous Band. This group cut their first records, for Decca, on December 20, 1938. By the time Jordan next recorded, in early 1939, he had changed the name of his band to Louis Jordan and his Tympany Five, a name he would continue to use, regardless of the number of men in his bands, until 1955.

Louis Jordan's first hit was "I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of Town" (1942), a song written and first recorded five years before by bluesman Casey Bill Weldon. In 1944 Jordan crossed over to the pop charts with "G.I. Jive," and his records continued to cross over until 1949.

Louis Jordan rarely sang sad songs. He made party music, pure and simple, in which every aspect of the expanding universe was seen in terms of fried fish, sloppy kisses, gin, and the saxophone whose message transcends knowing. In songs like "Caldonia (What Makes Your Head So Hard?)," "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie," "Beware," "Boogie Woogie Blue Plate," and "Blue Light Boogie," Jordan proved himself to be the crowning glory of postwar hep. At the height of his fame, in November 1946, he had concurrently held down the top three positions on the race charts: "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie" was Number 1, "Ain't that Just Like a Woman" (from which Chuck Berry stole his "Johnny B. Goode" guitar riff) was Number 2, and "Stone Cold Dead in the Market" was Number 3; his "That Chick's Too Young to Fry" was tied for Number 4 with Big Boy Crudup's "Ethel Mae." He emerged at the year's end having had four of the five most successful race records of 1946. (The fifth was Nat King Cole's "Christmas Song.")

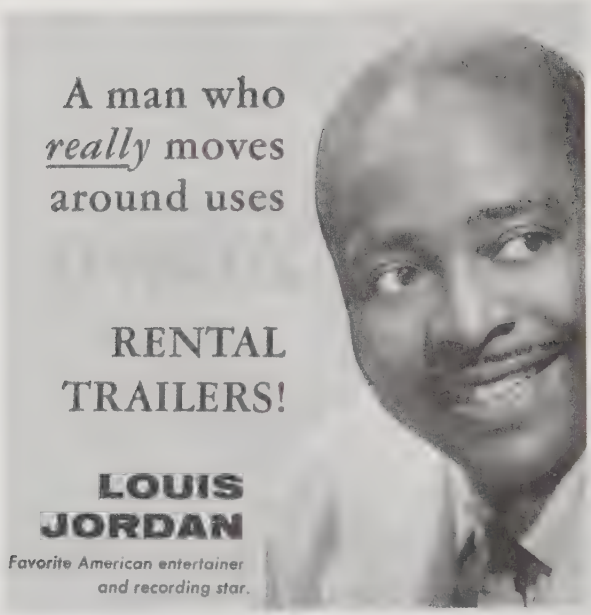
Throughout the forties, Jordan made movies, too: *Follow the Boys* (Universal, 1944); *Meet Miss Bobby Socks* (Columbia, 1944); *Caldonia* (Soundies, 1945); *Swing Parade of 1946* (Monogram, 1946); *Toot That Trumpet* (1946); *Beware*, advertised as "The first truly great ALL COLORED Musical Feature" (Astor, 1946); *Reet, Petite and Gone* (1947); *Look Out, Sister* (1948); and more than a dozen one-song Soundies (1942–46). (Later, in 1952, he was heard in the Tom and Jerry cartoon *Smitten Kitten*.)

Elegance, sophistication, and Dixie Peach. (Courtesy of Jonas Bernholm)

In his most impressive performance, "Let the Good Times Roll" (written by the mysterious Sam Theard, also known as Lovin' Sam and Spo-Dee-O-Dee), Jordan advised:

> *Don't sit there mumblin' and talkin'*
> *trash:*
> *If you wanna have a ball ya gotta go*
> *out and spend some cash,*
> *And let the good times roll.*

As early as 1949 Jordan's own lyrics were imbued not only with the spirit of what would come to be known as rock 'n' roll, but also with direct references to rock, as in "Saturday Night Fish Fry":



(Courtesy of Jonas Bernholm)

It was rockin', it was rockin';
You never seen such scufflin' and
shufflin' till the break of dawn.

"Saturday Night Fish Fry" was Louis Jordan's last pop hit. He had six more R&B hits; then, in 1951, he fell from fame. In 1954 Jordan left Decca and signed with Aladdin, a smaller, West Coast label. After Aladdin, he cut a handful of singles for two RCA subsidiaries, Vik and X. In 1956 he came to Mercury, for whom he made his last worthwhile recordings (mostly reworkings of his old Decca hits). After leaving Mercury in 1958, Jordan became less and less active. He recorded periodically, and with no success, throughout the sixties: for Lou-Wa and Warwick in 1960, for the British label Melodisc in 1962, for Ray Charles's Tangerine label in 1962-64, for Paul Gayten's short-lived Pzazz label in 1968, and for the French label Black & Blue in 1973. In 1974 he cut an album for Johnny Otis's Blues Spectrum label. It was his last record.

(Courtesy of KICKS)

In September 1974 Louis Jordan had a heart attack in Nevada. He recovered and announced his plans to tour Europe. A few months later, however, a further attack proved fatal, and he died at his home in Los Angeles on February 4, 1975. He was sixty-six years old. *Billboard* barely mentioned it.

Louis Jordan was criticized by some for catering to his white audiences. In an interview published in the English magazine *Blues Unlimited* a few years ago, Jordan admitted that he had at times made a conscious effort to render his performances acceptable to "the white crackers." Yet his spirit of whorish compromise was ahead of his time, too, in a way. Looking back now, it's easy to see that real rock 'n' roll has always been *anti*-purity, and that Louis Jordan was no more an Uncle Tom than Jimi Hendrix or Michael Jackson. He was a snazzier dresser than either of them, to boot.

In 1946 Astor Pictures released a musical called *Beware*. It centered on the Louis Jordan hit of the same name and year. The purported star of the film was Milton Woods (described as "the colored Basil Rathbone"), but the picture belongs to Louis Jordan and his band, who, in one wild and eerie scene, emerge galloping on horseback over the range—with glistening saxophones slung over their sharkskin shoulders. What finer way to be remembered?

Wynonie Harris

The Man Who Shook Down the Devil

We know that rock 'n' roll was not a human invention, that it was the work of the Holy Ghost. When, in an article called "Women Won't Leave Me Alone," published in the October 1954 issue of *Tan*, Wynonie Harris bragged that he "started the present vogue of 'rocking' blues tunes," he failed to mention the Holy Ghost, who had chosen Harris to serve him in his work. But Wynonie Harris was like that. Not even the Holy Ghost Hisself was safe from the unmoving sword of Harris's arrogance.

At about the time that Wynonie Harris was finishing his story for *Tan*, in the summer of 1954, Sun was distributing Elvis Presley's first single. Presley's second single, which was released in September 1954, was a song learned from one of Wynonie Harris's recordings: "Good Rockin' Tonight." (Harris had cut the song for King in December 1947, and it became one of the biggest R&B hits of 1948.) On the KWKH "Louisiana Hayride" that same autumn, Presley sang another song learned from Harris: "That's the Stuff You Gotta Watch," a Buddy Johnson song which Wynonie had recorded for Apollo in 1945.

Elvis learned more than songs from Wynonie Harris. The pelvic jab-and-parry, the petulant curlings of his lip, the evangelical wavings of his arms and hands—these were not the spontaneities of Elvis, but a style deftly learned from watching Wynonie Harris perform in Memphis in the early 1950s. Henry Glover, who produced most of Wynonie's records, told me when I spoke with him in the summer of 1977, "When you saw Elvis,

you were seeing a mild version of Wynonie."

Wynonie Harris was born on August 24, 1915, in Omaha, Nebraska. His parents, Luther and Nellie Harris, were church-going Baptists who wanted Wynonie to become a doctor. After graduating from Central High, he attended Creighton University as a pre-med student. He stuck it out for two years. Then, in 1934, came the calling of the Ghost. Harris began dancing for money in Jim Bell's Harlem, McGill's Blue Room, and other joints around Omaha. By the end of that year, when he was nineteen, he had married a woman named Olive Goodlow of Council Bluffs, Iowa, and he had turned from dancing to singing. Frequently making the two-hundred-mile trip from Omaha to Kansas City in the late 1930s, he learned well the lessons of the master, Big Joe Turner. In 1940 he traveled to Los Angeles, where he found a job singing for $17.50 a week in Baron Moorehead's orchestra at the Club Alabam, on Central Avenue near Forty-second. It was not long before he became a local celebrity, referred to as "Mr. Blues" by those who fancied themselves in the know. While in Los Angeles, he also took a job dancing in the Republic picture *Hit Parade of 1944*.

Returning east in early 1944, Harris headlined at the Chez Paree, then at other clubs in Kansas City. While in Kansas City, he was approached by the bandleader Lucky Millinder, who offered Harris $125 a week to be a secondary singer in his band. (Trevor Bacon was Millinder's regular vocalist.) Harris accepted and went with Millinder that spring to New York, where they opened at the Apollo Theatre. On May 26 Harris recorded two songs with Lucky Millinder and His Orchestra for Decca. The first, "Hurry, Hurry," released in July 1944, was a hit. The second, "Who Threw the Whiskey in the Well?," released in April 1945, was a bigger hit. By then Harris had left Millinder and returned to Los Angeles. The only money that he had seen from the two hits he had sung was $37.50, which Decca had paid him as a recording fee. This had taught him something. In the summer of 1945 Wynonie Harris began making records of his own.

His first solo recordings were released in September by Philo,

At the Baby Grand in Harlem, back when Elvis was just a silly name. (Courtesy of Jonas Bernholm)

the new Los Angeles label that Ed and Leo Mesner were running out of their Philharmonic Music Shop on West Fifth Street. (Less than a year later, due to legal problems, Philo became Aladdin.) Eight records followed on the Apollo label. Several of these songs were written by Harris. One of the best, "Time to Change Your Town," lamented the end of the flush wartime days.

When your money gets low,
It's time for you to change your town,
Because the war is over,
All the shipyards are closin' down.

Them boys used to wear diamonds;
You don't see those rings no more;
They used to ride Buicks and Cadillacs,
Now they're lucky to have a Ford.

Wynonie Harris

RHYTHM AND BLUES magazine No. 1, 1952. (Courtesy of KICKS)

The music-business establishment was hesitant in its acceptance of Wynonie Harris and his vigorously vulgar style of shouting the blues. In its review of his "Young and Wild," *Billboard* remarked rather aloofly that the record might perhaps be "Good for the back rooms at the Harlem spots." But it sold, and that's what mattered.

Wynonie and his wife, Olive, broke up at the end of 1946. By then he had begun to cultivate the lady-killer image that he maintained for the rest of his life (though for most of those years after 1946 he remained close to his second wife, Gertrude Sloan of Chicago, whom he nicknamed Ice Cream). "I play to create impressions," he said in the *Tan* article. "The women who really know me also know part of my secret. We can laugh about it together for they know how women can get stirred up by a man who seems cruel, ornery, vulgar and arrogant."

"I've had them to take enough pills to kill a horse, follow me from town to town in Cadillacs, give me money, threaten me and fight one another like crazy. It's all because I deal in sex. . . ."

"As a statement of fact, clean of any attempt to brag about it, I'm the highest-paid blues singer in the business. I'm a $1,500 a week man. Most of the other fellows sing for $50 to $75 a night. I don't. That is why I'm no Broadway star. The crooners star on the Great White Way and get swamped with Coca-Cola-drinking bobby-soxers and other 'jail bait.' I star in Georgia, Texas, Alabama, Tennessee and Missouri and get those who have money to buy stronger stuff and my records to play while they drink it.

"I like to sing to women with meat on their bones and that long green stuff in their pocketbooks. You find them mostly down South. As a matter of fact, I like all kinds of women, regardless of what color they are or what size and shape they may have. Just so long as they're breathing, that's me.

"In Dallas, Texas, recently, where I was singing with the Big Rhythm and Blues Show that featured Joe Louis, Ruth Brown, Lester Young, Buddy Johnson and the Edwards Sisters, a white chick came out to our concert at the ball park. She sat right down front in the 'white' section and I saw her eyes following my every movement while I sang my old standby, 'Wynonie's Blues.' In it

there's the line: 'Let's drink some mash and talk some trash this morning.' It's what we call in the trade, a 'rocker' or a punch line, and it seldom misses making the women squeal.

"Well, this white girl jumped up and hollered out loud as if she was in church and shouting after the preacher said something to make her 'happy.' I didn't think anything about it and took my bows and went off. When I got back to the dressing room, however, there she was. I got rather warm and sweaty when she said, 'Mister, you really thrilled me with your singing. I'm a stenographer, I'm 22 and single. Could you come to my house later on tonight and sing for me?'

"You know what I told her! I stayed in the men's room for over 45 minutes until I thought she had gone and then made a break for it in my car. . . ."

He spent money like it was going out of style. When he received a $10,000 royalty check from his Apollo records, the world became for him a new place. "I bought me two Cadillacs and hired me two chauffeurs and people used to line up around 4 a.m. when I finished for the night at the Baby Grand in Harlem and watch me come out and pick out which of my cars would take me home."

While in Nashville to perform at the Club Zanzibar in early 1946, Harris cut two records there for Jim Bulleit's new Bullet label. After that he recorded two singles in Los Angeles for Lionel Hampton's Hamp-Tone label. In 1947 he recorded again for the Mesner brothers. Then, in December of that year, he signed with King Records in Cincinnati.

He stayed with King until 1954. During his seven years with the label, he became one of the biggest R&B singers of the era, and made some of the greatest rock-'n'-roll records in history.

His big hits dealt either with getting drunk ("Drinkin' Wine, Spo-Dee-O-Dee," "Bloodshot Eyes") or getting laid ("I Like My Baby's Pudding," "Lovin' Machine"). His monumental version of "Good Rockin' Tonight" (Roy Brown had done the original less than a year before) was recorded three days after Christmas 1947. Released in February, it hit Number 1 on the *Billboard* race charts, as they were still called, in early June. Although his 1949

"All She Wants to Do Is Rock" sold more copies, it was "Good Rockin' Tonight" that heralded the new era of American music.

He has been remembered by those who knew him as a wildman, a creature of lurid excesses. Roy Brown, who wrote "Good Rockin' Tonight," recalled that "He'd walk into a bar and shout 'Here comes the blues!' He was wild. He'd jump off the bar and say, 'Man, I'll eat you up!' He was like that. He got shot through the head, he got shot through the ears, he'd get beat up, but he didn't mean no harm." (For the record, the only shooting injury sustained by Harris was one in his hand, inflicted by an irate cuckold.)

Ralph Bass, who worked for King (he is the one who later brought James Brown to the label) before joining Chess in 1958, told me, "He always had a broad. Shit, man, he didn't have any respect. He'd walk up and insult a woman right in front of her man. He'd say, 'Hey, bitch, what you doin' here, whore?' And call 'em all kindsa names. And there were very few cats he respected, he stayed away from.

"One night in Cincinnati, he picked me up and he was gonna fight Ezzard Charles, when Ez was champ, 'cause Ez was hittin' on his old lady. Christ," he laughed, "what a night. That was at the old Cotton Club there.

"I remember there was five beautiful showgirls stayin' at the Manse Hotel. He was there at the same time and he had this whore from Chicago with him, and he told the whore, 'Look, don't talk to these girls. These girls are respectable girls.'

"That's the way he was. He was very arrogant. Knew what he was doing. And, what the hell, he lived." Bass paused, then burst into laughter. "At least he wasn't on drugs!"

Producer Henry Glover, grasping for kind adjectives, told me that "He was, uh, very likable. At times. He carried sort of a, I don't know, negative attitude. Really, I think it was just he was frightened at people. Didn't wanna be around 'em. Drank a lot of whiskey." At this point, Mrs. Glover, who was listening to her husband's words, interjected a few of her own—"He was very loud and very vulgar"—and Henry laughed softly and said, "This man was a concept. Hell, he was too much."

In the late 1950s, Wynonie Harris fell into obscurity. There were several comeback attempts. He cut a single for Atco in 1956, one for Roulette in 1960. Late in 1956 he told an interviewer from *Rock and Roll Roundup* that "The criticism has made Elvis Presley. I think that he is okay. Elvis has made one song that I like, 'Don't Be Cruel.' Many people have been giving him a lot of trouble about swinging his hips. I swing mine and have no trouble. He's got publicity he could not buy."

As the sixties began, Wynonie Harris was all but forgotten. He lived in St. Albans, New York. He bought a bar there. He lost the bar in 1963. He moved to Los Angeles. In 1967 Preston Love, the leader of the Motown Orchestra, asked Harris to perform with the band at Santa Monica.

"Wynonie attempted to sing. He couldn't. He sang one or two numbers. It was hopeless," Love recalled. "And I had young studio-types in the band that couldn't play anything but the spurious, synthetic, modern, mathematical blues. So I said to Wynonie, 'Man, go on. Forget it,' because the people wouldn't accept him. That's the last time he ever tried to sing. Never again. Not one more note."

Wynonie Harris was sick, but he kept on drinking and carrying on. Ralph Bass said that "Several days before he died, there was a cab driver that used to buddy with him, and he called the cab driver and said, 'Come on, pick me up.' And the cab driver said, 'No broads?' 'No, just me.' And he made all the joints in L.A. and the cab driver seemed to think Wynonie had a feeling it wouldn't be too long, he wanted to see everything. He got dressed real sharp. Every joint in L.A."

The story that Preston Love told in the liner notes of *Oh Babe!*, a 1983 Dutch anthology of Harris's recordings, is a more somber one. "We ex-Omahans who had known him all his life and were living in Los Angeles gave a benefit for Wynonie in June 1969 at the Caribbean Club. When I walked in the club, he was sitting there at the bar with Patty, his daughter by his first wife, Ollie. He was a broken, bent-over man. He looked much older than me, but he still was brave and tried to carry it through. . . . It pained me so much to see him like this and I circulated around

and shook hands with some of the hometown friends. When I came back to the bar he was gone. There was a little anteroom, a little foyer in the club, where two people could step in out of the wind and come on in the second door. I looked out through a window and saw him standing out there. He was just standing there, bent-over, in terrible pain. I backed up so he wouldn't notice me. He finally got himself together and straightened up. He came on back in blustering like he was OK, but he was in terrible pain."

He died in Los Angeles little more than a week later, on June 14, 1969.

Eight years later, when I was trying to ascertain how old Wynonie Harris had been when he died, Ralph Bass advised, "Whatever age he was when he died, just double it. That's the way that motherfucker lived. Every minute, every blessed minute." Those are good closing words; but better still are those words with which Wynonie Harris closed that story he wrote on the eve of his descent into oblivion: "I don't mix the Lord with the Devil. They are the two I'm most afraid of. As long as I'm with the Devil, I'm going to shake him down for everything, every dime I can get."

Charles Brown

From the School of Cool, Endlessly Drifting

Charles Brown was the man who took the torch from Nat King Cole in 1945, as Cole's rhythms softened and mellowed into the music of his glory. Like Cole, he was a classy character, a piano-player and a singer whose style was a blend of the low-down and the elegant.

He was born Charles Mose Brown on September 13, 1922, the son of Mose and Mattie Brown, in a shack behind a church in Texas City, Texas, not far south of Houston. Mattie died when Charles was barely six months old, and she herself barely twenty-one. Her deathbed wish was that the boy should be raised by her parents, Swannie and Conquest Simpson. Swannie was the director of the Barbous Chapel Baptist Church Choir and Chorale, and it was she who taught her grandson how to play piano, and how to try to make the sounds of Art Tatum, Fats Waller, and the others that turned the air to exultation and moved the keys like magic when he pumped the player-piano rolls round and round. She introduced him not only to gospel music and jazz, but to classical as well. There were lessons from a Mrs. Wallace, whom he didn't like because she smacked his fingers when they erred; then lessons in nearby Galveston, with a Miss Janice Felder and a Cora Gamble. He played piano in church, and by the age of fourteen, as a student at Central High in Galveston, he was playing in the nightclubs of Galveston Beach with Central High's bandleader, Fleming Huff, and physics teacher Costello James. He snuck into other joints to listen to musicians such as Ivory Joe Hunter, men who were breathing

fierce new life into the old Texas blues. He began writing blues songs of his own. After graduating from high school and working a summer as an orderly at John Sealy Hospital, Charles Brown did something no Texas blues singer had ever done before him: he went to college.

He attended Prairie View for four years, studying chemistry, mathematics, and education. In those years, he lost his grandfather Conquest, he himself nearly died of malaria, and Louis Jordan's "Knock Me a Kiss" changed the way he heard the world. In the spring of 1943, he received his bachelor-of-science degree and taught awhile at Carver High School in Baytown. A civil-service appointment as a junior chemist took him to the Pine Bluff Arsenal, in Arkansas. After volunteering for army war service and being classified 4-F because of asthma, he journeyed to Los Angeles. At the Lincoln Theatre, on Central Avenue, he won an amateur talent contest by performing the *Warsaw* Concerto and a boogie-woogie "St. Louis Blues," and was given a job playing piano with the theater's orchestra, led by Bardu-Ali. (Drumming in the orchestra at the time was twenty-one-year-old John Veliotes, a Greek who pretended to be black, went by the name of Johnny Otis, and later came into his own as a rock-'n'-roll star under that assumed name.) After the Lincoln, he got a job entertaining the dinner clientele at Ivie's Chicken Shack. (Ivie was Ivie Anderson, who had sung on "I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good" and many other Duke Ellington recordings from 1931 to 1942.) He quit Ivie's to join two guys who were looking for a new piano player for their trio.

The two guys were, like Charles, from Texas: thirty-seven-year-old guitarist Johnny Moore and thirty-one-year-old bass-player Eddie Williams, both of whom had caught Brown's act at the Lincoln amateur show. Their trio, formed as an equal partnership in late 1942, was called Johnny Moore's Three Blazers. The group's original pianist, the tubercular Garland Finney, had left to join Erskine Hawkins.

"Charles at that time lacked the polish of the professional, but he had the technique and he was smooth enough that we knew he'd take to polish real easy," Eddie Williams recalled many years

Charles Brown, Johnny Moore, Eddie Williams.
(Courtesy of Jonas Bernholm)

later. "We taught him by tying his left hand behind his back and making him practice with just his right hand. You see, we didn't want that left hand playing the bass lines because that was my territory. I had the bottom. Charles would work with just his right hand, answering himself. Like, he'd sing a line and then answer himself on the piano. He and Johnny worked out figurations together. Johnny would see what Charles was gonna do, and then he'd fill in with the guitar. After they got all that down, Charles used his left hand again, but it was to balance what the right hand was doing by playing foundation chords. That's why the three of us sounded so good. We had it all worked out."

Johnny's kid brother, Oscar Moore, was the guitarist in the Nat King Cole Trio, having joined Cole in 1937. After Cole cut two records for Robert Scherman's little Premier label (later to become Atlas), Johnny, Eddie, and Charles came to Scherman's Sunset Boulevard studio as well. With Oscar joining them, they recorded "Tell Me You'll Wait for Me," written by Oscar and Charles, and other songs. Frankie Laine, who was then living in

his car, was also there that night. He sang instead of Charles on two songs, Scherman's "Melancholy Madeline" and "Maureen."

In the spring of 1945, Johnny Moore's Three Blazers recorded for Exclusive, run by Leon René, a transplanted Louisiana Creole whose older brother, Otis, had been running his own Excelsior, for which Leon had produced the King Cole Trio and others, since 1942, the year before Exclusive got under way. (Both brothers had done well in 1944 with "Mexico Joe" by Brown's former employer Ivie Anderson, released by both Excelsior and Exclusive.) The Blazers' first Exclusive record, "You Taught Me to Love," coupled with "Johnny's Boogie," was released in July. Like their Premier debut, it went unnoticed. It was reissued in December, coupled with "Blues at Sunrise," on which the band backed Brown's old Texas mentor, Ivory Joe Hunter. "Blues at Sunrise," released under Hunter's name, became both his own and the Blazers' first national R&B hit.

The group, meanwhile, found steady work at a club called Talk of the Town. Charles had written a song titled "Drifting Blues"—more of an exquisite tragedy, a lush melancholy unto itself—and by the time the group moved to the Copa Club, Brown and the group had perfected the song. It became a thing of legend throughout the city, drawing more and more people to Johnny Moore's Three Blazers as 1945 drew to its end. Two of those who came were Ed Mesner, the cofounder with his brother, Leo, of the new Philo Records, and the producer Sammy "The Black Jew" Goldberg (who, Eddie Williams recalled, "kept throwing up a dollar every time we played 'Drifting Blues'"). It was Goldberg who told Mesner that "Drifting Blues" was a blank check.

Mesner brought Johnny Moore's Three Blazers, along with drummer Johnny Otis, into the studio on the night of September 14, 1945. Eight songs were recorded that night—revamped standards, such as "Till the Real Thing Comes Along," from 1931, and originals by the three of them, such as "Blazer's Boogie" and "Race-Track Blues." But the main event that night was their recording of Charles's "Drifting Blues." (Thinking themselves shrewd—there were, after all, no royalties for the Blazers of the

world in those days, merely session money and promises—they recorded an abbreviated version of the song, then went over to Joe Bihari's Modern Records and recorded the leftovers as "Traveling Blues." They allayed Mesner's wrath by saying they had recorded for Modern before signing with Philo.)

"Drifting Blues" hit the R&B charts in late February 1946, and it stayed on the charts through August. Though it never became Number 1, but only Number 2 (the Number 1 position on the R&B charts that entire year was shared by only three artists: Louis Jordan, who held it with five records for a total of thirty-eight weeks; Lionel Hampton and Dinah Washington, with "Hey! Ba-Ba-Re-Bop"; and the Ink Spots, with "The Gypsy"), "Drifting Blues" was a cataclysm. Never again would the blues be associated with a bunch of tore-down shines too drunk to piss standing up. Charles Brown had made the blues cool, had elucidated a despair as sleek as a gleaming black Buick rolling down the highway at dusk.

After the one Philo session, which was indeed the blank check that the Black Jew had prophesied, the band returned to Leon René's Exclusive, which was riding high on the success of "The Honeydripper" by Joe Liggins. Coming out only days after the Blazers' first Exclusive release the previous summer, Liggins's record hit Number 1 on the R&B charts, stayed on the charts for more than six months, and emerged as the best-selling R&B hit of the decade. For the next four years, the Blazers recorded both for Exclusive and for the Bihari brothers' Modern. When Johnny's brother, Oscar, left Cole in 1947, he joined them. (They didn't change their names to the Four Blazers, however. New business cards don't come free.) Their sound was irrevocably their own. Defined by the brilliantly interwoven lines of the Moore brothers' amplified guitars—especially Johnny's big Super 400—and Brown's piano, and above all by Brown's voice, it was a sound with all the elusive qualities of nighttime wind, now hard and then gentle, now soothing and then omnious.

There were more hits: "Sunny Road" and "So Long" in late 1946; "New Orleans Blues," written by René, "Changeable Woman Blues," and "Merry Christmas Baby" in 1947 (the latter,

a hit again the following season, would become one of the great rock-'n'-roll perennials); "Groovy Movie Blues," "Jilted Blues," "More Than You Know," and "Lonesome Blues" in 1948. But there was not another "Drifting Blues."

Late in 1948, there was trouble. Years before, when Eddie Williams and his trombone-playing brother, Leo, had been performing with Billy Eckstine in the Hawaiian islands, "this Indian fortune-teller came to a dance we were playing. He picked me out of the group and said, 'I'd like to talk with ya.' So we sat down and talked. He said, 'You're going to run into a man who's got snake eyes, a gray-eyed snake, but the two of you are going to become great friends and make a lot of money. But in the end, the snake is gonna bite you." Not long after that, in Los Angeles, Williams and gray-eyed Johnny Moore had become friends. The Blazers had always shared alike, split everything three ways. But now, with Oscar in the group, there seemed to be a strange tension in the air whenever the money was on the table. "You know what they say about blood being thicker than water," Williams would later say. "I think Oscar started him thinking about our old deal of all for one and one for all. I guess Johnny started thinking that since his name was the biggest in the group, he should get more money. There was all this talk about squeezing Charles and me out of the split and putting us on salary." To aggravate matters, they were not in good hands, none of them. Fame had raised her skirts quickly, and they had dived blindly under, squandering what money they made, mismanaging the rest, and falling for the line of every Black Jew and sweet-smiling cracker that came along. And there was Johnny's gambling. They had always been gamblers, all of them—"Race-Track Blues," written by the three of them in 1945, was for them more than words and melody—but now the action was getting out of hand, especially for Johnny, who started borrowing against future income and signing away publishing rights. He was desperate, and, as Williams put it, "he'd let those Jewboys tell him, 'bass players are a dime a dozen. Give him two hundred dollars a week.'"

Thunder struck in New York. After a show there, Johnny returned to California to have a kidney removed. Oscar left town

as well, then Charles. Williams stayed in New York. One day, at the offices of the William Morris Agency, which handled the Blazers, Williams was taken aside by "some punk," who "walked me over to this balcony where you could look way down on the street. Then he said he'd like me to sign a new contract that would cut me out of my one-third. He let me know that if I didn't sign, I might fall over that balcony." Williams peered down, and he signed the contract, putting himself on a hireling's salary, cutting himself down from a grand or so a week to two hundred dollars.

He left the Blazers not long after that, his anger toward Moore eventually turning to sympathy and then renewed fondness. He started his own band, found and hired another L.A. Texan, twenty-year-old pianist Floyd Dixon, and started anew, hitting the top of the R&B charts in late 1949 with "Broken Hearted" on Supreme.

Charles Brown soon set off on his own as well, leaving Moore, who had lawful right to the name of the group, to record and perform with his brother and others as the Blazers, using Brown sound-alike Billy Valentine and then a succession of female singers. Signing with Aladdin (formerly Philo; Mesner had changed the name on account of legal problems, in early 1946, right after "Drifting Blues"), Brown recorded as Charles Brown and His Smarties and, more simply and wisely, as the Charles Brown Trio, with Herman "Tiny" Mitchell on guitar and Nat Cole alumnus Wesley Prince on bass. He hit with the nasty "Get Yourself Another Fool" in February 1949.

That spring Brown did what he and the Blazers had been unable to do together. He surpassed both the power and the success of "Drifting Blues" with another tombstone killer called "Trouble Blues." It stayed Number 1 throughout the summer. The years that followed were the years of Charles Brown's glory. The hits kept coming: "In the Evening When the Sun Goes Down" and "Homesick Blues" later in 1949; "My Baby's Gone" in the spring of 1950. Then, in the first cold days of 1951, with Eddie Williams playing bass beside him in the studio, he completed the triad of doom begun by "Drifting Blues" and "Trouble

Blues." As February gave way to Lenten March, his recording of "Black Night," written by Jessie Mae Robinson, seized the Number 1 position from fellow Texas pianist and Aladdin artist Amos Milburn's "Bad, Bad Whiskey" and held it for more than three months.

Brown had never let his art stand in the way of sexual fulfillment—wisely, for, as the sage of Tyre said, "The art of man is eternal, but the seasons of his dick are numbered."

"I had a few beautiful love affairs," he recollected. With whom? you might ask. No problem. "Namely Espanola Flournoy [a Houston girl who had inspired young Brown's first song, 'Lost in the Night,' occasioned by the news that she was marrying another], Zola Scott, Arlene Young, Fannie Willie"—and the list goes on. But is was singer Mabel Scott, several years his senior, whom Charles Brown married. That marriage lasted from 1949, the year of "Trouble Blues," to 1951, the year of "Black Night." Then, like other marriages, it turned to shit. Brown's career followed suit. There were a few more hits; but by early 1952, when the last of them, "Hard Times," came out, its title was more than a songwriter's conceit. He remained with Aladdin for nearly five more years, making records—some fine, some not so fine—while the world forgot his name.

He traveled the South in 1954 as part of the Johnny Ace package show. In September 1957, in New York, he made a record for Atlantic's short-lived East West label. In 1959, he recorded with his companion rock-'n'-roll refugee Amos Milburn in New Orleans for Ace. In September 1960, in Cincinnati, he and Milburn recorded one side each of a Christmas record for King. Brown's side, "Please Come Home for Christmas," appearing briefly on the charts in late December, was his last, minor hit. He remained with King through the summer of 1968, when, lost in the Cincinnati dead of August, he recorded a new version of "Merry Christmas Baby." During those years, Imperial, which acquired the Aladdin catalogue, remastered and repackaged some of his classic recordings, in 1962–63; and there were new albums recorded for Mainstream, one done in San Francisco in 1963, the other in New York late the following year.

Johnny Moore, Charles Brown, Eddie Williams.
(Courtesy of Jonas Bernholm)

The latter, *Ballads My Way*, included startling takes on "Pledging My Love," "Blueberry Hill," "Night Life," and others. (Sam Cooke's 1963 album *Night Beat*, which fared far, far better than either of Brown's, was, meanwhile, an all-out evocation of Brown. Strangely, Cooke did not acknowledge by name the object of his tribute. Likewise, few had tied Cooke's 1962 hit "Bring It on Home to Me" to its source in "I Want to Go Home," Brown's 1959 Ace duet with Amos Milburn.) There were singles made in Los Angeles for Lilly, Kent, Galaxy, Cenco (with Johnny Moore), and Jewel; albums for Bluesway and Jewel came in 1969—the year of Johnny's death—and 1970. In 1973 he returned to cut one last single for King, a rendition of "For the Good Times." He recorded more albums, for Blues Spectrum (1974), Big Town (1977), and Jefferson (1978).

In the summer of 1986, when he had been all but written off for dead, Charles Brown cut one of the most remarkable al-

bums—a compact disc, no less—of that entire sorry-ass decade: *One More for the Road*, on Blue Side (reissued in 1989 by Alligator). At the end of 1990, he closed out that decade with an even more startling compact-disc collection, *All My Life* (Rounder). Forty-five years after "Drifting Blues," Charles Mose Brown still had it; and he has it still.

Not a bad toup, either. This guy should live forever, doing what he does.

Ella Mae Morse

The Cow-Cow Girl

Ella Mae Morse—Miss Morse to you—was born on September 12, 1924, in Mansfield, Texas, a small place not too far south of Dallas. Her mother was a pianist. Her father was a drummer. Her breasts developed at an early age. Aside from these meager facts, little is known of Ella Mae's younger years.

Full-breasted, yet un-high-schooled, Miss Morse began singing in her father's local jazz band in the late 1930s. Towards the end of 1938 Jimmy Dorsey, passing through Texas, happened to hear her. So very impressed was he with the well-gartered, fiery-voiced fourteen-year-old girl that he immediately offered her a job as lead singer in his band.

Ella Mae began traveling with the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra in January 1939. She made it as far the Hotel New Yorker. It was there that she posed for some fine leg art (published on page 19 of the February 1939 issue of *Down Beat*); and it was there, on February 20, that, perhaps because leg art was all Dorsey got from the fourteen-year-old girl, she was replaced by nineteen-year-old Helen O'Connell.

At the close of 1939 Freddie Slack, the legendary, twenty-nine-year-old boogie-woogie man who had been with Dorsey since 1937, quit the band to become the arranger and pianist for Will Bradley's Orchestra. Less than two years later, Slack forsook the big-band sound and formed his own group, the Freddie Slack Trio. In September 1941 and January 1942 the trio found work recording with Joe Turner in Los Angeles. Not long after these

sessions (from which came the Joe Turner beauties "Goin' to Chicago" and "Blues in the Night"), Slack decided to expand his band and add a vocalist. It was then that he remembered the teenage Texas girl with sinful bosom and voice aflame. She was all of seventeen now.

Slack was the first artist to be signed by Johnny Mercer's new Capitol label. When he went into a Los Angeles studio to record on May 21, 1942, he brought with him Ella Mae Morse. That session, Ella Mae's recording debut, resulted in the first hit in the history of Capitol Records, "Cow-Cow Boogie," a song which had been written the year before by Gene DePaul, Benny Carter, and Don Raye. (Raye had previously written the boogie classics "Down the Road a Piece," "Rhumboogie," and "Beat Me, Daddy, Eight to the Bar.")

"Cow-Cow Boogie" was released on July 1, 1942, hit the charts in August, and eventually rose to Number 9. With Freddie Slack playing piano behind her, Ella Mae performed the song in the 1943 Columbia picture *Reveille With Beverly*, a musical which also featured Count Basie, Duke Ellington, the Mills Brothers, and Frank Sinatra. Later that year, she appeared in another movie, *The Sky's the Limit*, released by RKO in August.

Before "Cow-Cow Boogie" appeared on the charts, Slack and Morse had returned to the studio, on July 20. A surprising addition to the band at this session was guitarist T-Bone Walker. Once again, Slack and Morse came up with what was to be a hit, "Mister Five by Five," which entered the pop charts in December 1942 and rose to Number 10.

Ella Mae and Slack parted company in 1943. For the next two years, she, like Slack, recorded as a solo artist for Capitol. (She also appeared in two Universal movies during 1944, *South of Dixie* and *Ghost Catchers*.) Several of Ella Mae's records during those years were hot—"Invitation to the Blues," "Patty Cake Man," "Buzz Me"—but there were no hits. On February 12, 1946, Morse and Slack reunited in the studio, joined this time by the elusive Don Raye himself. The result was one of the most apocalyptic recordings in the history of what in a few years' time would be called rock 'n' roll.

Written by Raye and Slack, "The House of Blue Lights" opened with a fast-spoken dialogue between Raye and Morse as Slack pounded piano behind them. It is perhaps the classic hep colloquy.

> *Well, whatcha say, baby? You look as ready as Mr. Freddy this black. How 'bout you and me goin' spinnin' at the track?*
>
> *What's that, homie? If you think I'm goin' dancin' on a dime, your clock is tickin' on the wrong time.*
>
> *Well, what's your pleasure, treasure? You call the plays, I'll dig the ways.*
>
> *Ay, daddy-o, I'm not so crude as to drop my mood on a square from way back. I'm there and have to dig life with father—and I mean Father Slack.*
>
> *Well, baby, your plate gives my weight a solid flip. You snap the whip, I'll make the trip.*

Then Ella Mae—free, white, and twenty-one now—began to sing one of the roughest, sexiest hymns to the night that had ever been heard. The record was released by Capitol on April 1, 1946. Like most of Morse's records, it hit the R&B charts; but it never made the pop charts. The uncrude did, however, get to see her sing the song in *How Do You Do?*, released in September of that year by Young American Films.

Ella Mae Morse continued to record for Capitol through 1947—the raunchy "Pig Foot Pete" and the funny, nasty "Pine Top Schwartz" stand out—but there were no pop hits. She married a Navy man named Marvin Gerber, settled down in Palo Alto, and birthed three children. Soon the Cow-Cow Boogie Girl was forgotten.

She came back in the fall of 1951, singing in West Coast clubs and recording for Capitol a strange mixture of pop, country, and black material: country songs such as "Tennessee Saturday Night," "A-Sleepin' at the Foot of the Bed," and "Big Mamou"; R&B songs such as "Greyhound" and "Smack Dab in the Middle." Her hungry-housewife voice was as strong and sultry as

Eros loosens the limbs. (Courtesy of Capitol Records)

ever it had been—stronger perhaps, and more sultry—but no one seemed to understand what she was doing.

In 1954 Capitol released her startling LP *Barrelhouse, Boogie, and the Blues*, composed of her versions of recent R&B songs: the Ravens' "Rock Me All Night Long," the Drifters' "Money Honey," Bull Moose Jackson's "I Love You, Yes I Do," Ruth Brown's "Daddy, Daddy," and more. She sang magnificently, ruthlessly ("Rock Me All Night Long" emerged from her throat as not merely suggestive, but as sublimely and plainly lewd). But it was to be at least another year till the advent of Elvis and the appreciation of such things.

Autumn 1943. (Courtesy of Capitol Records)

Ella Mae Morse withdrew again a few years later, and Capitol released her last record in 1957, when she was barely thirty-three. No one heard from her again until 1976, when she emerged for a handfull of club dates in the Los Angeles area. But it was over, and the tears of ancient hepsters fell as the lank lady stood onstage and sang "Feelings" and "Send in the Clowns." Someone had indeed, ahem, pulled the plug on the house of blue lights.

"They tell me," Ella Mae Morse recalled, "that I was the first gal singer to hit the big time with one record. It ['Cow-Cow Blues'] sold way over a million, I hear. I wasn't getting royalties. Man, I made thirty-five bucks on it. Isn't that the end!" Perhaps, my well-gartered girl; perhaps.

Cecil Gant

Owl Stew, and All That

Cecil Gant was born in Nashville, Tennessee, on April 4, 1913. His early years are a faded stain of which nothing is known, nor probably ever will be known.

Our first glimpse of him is in 1944: a small black soldier in a loud crowd at a wartime bond rally on the corner of Broadway and Ninth in Los Angeles. He approached the bandstand during an intermission and asked to play the piano. They let him. He went over so well that the local campaign committee sought and got permission from Gant's commanding officer for him to perform at all Treasury Bond rallies in the Los Angeles area.

Later that year, Richard A. Nelson started his Gilt-Edge Records expressly to record Gant and his song "I Wonder," a strong, stormy ballad sung from the viewpoint of an overseas soldier who torments himself with wondering about who's giving his sweetheart a shot in the shorts back on the homefront. The flip side of Gilt-Edge 501 was a breakneck boogie-woogie rocker, "Cecil Boogie." When *Billboard* got around to reviewing "I Wonder," in its issue of January 6, 1945, it remarked that the record sounded "like something picked up with a hidden machine in a smoky back room." But, at the same time, "I Wonder" had hit *Billboard*'s "Harlem Hit Parade" in October and would eventually end up as one of the great R&B successes of 1944–45, a Number 1 hit both by Gant and by Roosevelt Sykes, who covered it for Bluebird.

"I Wonder" sold so well, in fact, that Gilt-Edge issued a special pressing of the disc, on which a smiling Cecil Gant, in the khaki

shirt and tie of his buck-private wardrobe, could be seen sitting at the piano. It was the first rock-'n'-roll picture disc.

Gant recorded prolifically for Gilt-Edge through May 1946. All his releases bore the name "Pvt. Cecil Gant," and he was further billed as "The G.I. Sing-Sation." From early 1946 to 1949 Gant recorded for Bullet Records, in his hometown of Nashville. Jim Bulleit, who ran Bullet, and who now operates a candy company outside Nashville, told me in 1977 that he "never recorded a thing on him [Gant] that didn't sell and make money. It was just uncanny."

"He drank too much," Bulleit recalled on another occasion. "He would say, 'I want to do a session' when he ran out of money. We would get a bass-player and a guitarist and get him a piano, and I'd go sit in the control room, and he'd tinkle around on it, and then he'd say, 'I'm ready,' and tap that bottle; and if we didn't get it the first time, we didn't get it, 'cause he couldn't remember what he did. He'd dream up and write a song while he sat there, and he'd give me the title of it. And the uniqueness of the thing is that all of them sold."

In 1949 Gant returned to Los Angeles, recording there for the related Down Beat and Swing Time labels. After that, in early 1950, he cut two singles for Imperial in New Orleans. The following summer he began recording for Decca in New York.

Cecil Gant's last session was held on January 19, 1951. Not long after that, he was dead. Although the exact circumstances of his premature demise are unknown—beyond the fact that he died on February 4, 1951, at Hubbard Hospital in Nashville, ostensibly of pneumonia—it was generally believed that, like so many of these characters, he died from a surfeit of drink.

Gant's biggest hits—"I Wonder" (1944), "I'm Tired" (1945), "Another Day, Another Dollar" (1948), "I'm a Good Man, but a Poor Man" (1948), and so on—were slow, melancholy songs. His most remarkable stuff, however, was a group of fiery piano rockers with titles like "Nashville Jumps" (1946), "Ninth Street Jive" (1946), "We're Gonna Rock" (1950), "Owl Stew" (1951), and "Rock Little Baby" (1951).

Gant's deep swampish voice, which lent gravity and pathos to

his slower, sadder songs, gave to his breakneck rockers a certain jarring audacity. In "Nashville Jumps" he rasped:

Seen ya goin' up Cedar Street hill,
I know you got your whiskey from
Jack Daniel's still!
Nashville really jumps, really jumps
all night long;
I'd rather be in Nashville than to be
way back down at home.
Yeah, jump, Nashville!

Before the last stanza, Gant yelled, "Bring me another drink and I'll be all right!" (He shouted something similar in "Ninth Street Jive," but quickly amended the request to, "Call that waiter and tell him to bring me a *fifth*!")

On "We're Gonna Rock" he simply chanted, over and over, like some sort of manic, apocalyptic subhuman, pounding his piano with both fists:

We're gonna rock, we're gonna roll,
We're gonna rock, we're gonna roll;
We're gonna roll, we're gonna rock,
We're gonna roll, we're gonna rock.

His "Owl Stew" was a private tribute to a whorehouse on Fourth Avenue North in Nashville. "The stew in Nashville," he explained, one eye open, one eye shut, "it really is the best . . . the price is low; if you get it once, you gonna want some mo'."

Though he recorded for a mere seven years, Cecil Gant proved himself to be one of the great rockers of the late forties. He told his friends in Tennessee that all he really wanted to do was to play the piano and get drunk, laid, and rich. He succeeded in all but the last. Three out of four isn't bad at all.

Amos Milburn

The Chicken Shack Factor

"I practiced what I preached," Amos Milburn told me in July 1979, referring to his old hits—hits like "Bad, Bad Whiskey," "Let Me Go Home, Whiskey," and "One Scotch, One Bourbon, One Beer,"

"I was a heavy drinker. I loved that scotch. And the Devil kept tellin' me: Go on, Amos, drink all you want to, it'll never hurt you none. I drank myself into two strokes." It was a low, faint voice that spoke. It bore little resemblance to that cool, tough Amos Milburn voice of twenty-five, thirty years ago, that voice that bespoke the ceaseless saxophones of salvation, the crossing and uncrossing of restless nylon knees, the eightfold path of the unfiltered Kool, and the miracle of Our Lady of the After-Hours Joint. But the party had been over for years now.

Amos Milburn was born in Houston, Texas, on April 1, 1927. He graduated from high school in 1942, at the age of fifteen. Lying about his age, he signed up with the Navy for the duration of World War Two, and served three years as a steward's mate aboard an infantry landing craft. During the course of his service, Milburn earned thirteen battle scars in engagements at Guadalcanal, Bougainville, and the Philippines. His boogie-woogie piano-playing was in demand at officers' clubs on islands everywhere. On May 5, 1945, eighteen-year-old Milburn was discharged. Returning home to Houston, he formed a small band and hit the clubs.

He was playing a joint in San Antonio in 1946. A woman named Lola Anne Cullum, wife of a Houston dentist, ap-

"Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink." (Courtesy of Jonas Bernholm)

proached Amos and explained that she had recently started a booking and management agency in Houston. Not long after, the two got together in Houston. Lola Anne made some raw, paper-backed tapes of Milburn's songs and sent them to Aladdin Records in Los Angeles. In September of the same year, she and Milburn (along with Lightnin' Hopkins, another of Lola Anne's discoveries) traveled to the Coast. On September 12, Milburn cut his first sides, for Aladdin.

Milburn's third release, a version of the 1940 Don Raye hit, "Down the Road Apiece" (the same song that the Rolling Stones did on *The Rolling Stones, Now!*), was a minor hit, but it wasn't until 1948 that he had his first Number 1 R&B hit, with his own "Chicken Shack Boogie."

"Chicken Shack Boogie" was a hardrocker celebrating the

A crust of bread, a fifth of Dewar's, and thou.
(Courtesy of Tom Usselmann)

countless after-hours joints hidden away on the outskirts of Texas towns, places where you could eat, drink, and often gamble until past the break of day. (Thirty-five years later, the chicken shacks are still rocking hard. Next time you're in Austin, find Webberville Road and follow it till it fades away into dirt: you'll be at Ernie's Chicken Shack. Just don't shoot dice.)

For more than ten years, from 1946 to 1957, Amos Milburn cut some of the toughest records in the history of rock 'n' roll, records built upon raw electric guitar, drunken tenor sax (usually played by the great Maxwell Davis), and Milburn's own piano and voice. In "Walking Blues" (1950) and "Roll Mr. Jelly" (1952), he bragged about what a great fuck he was. (In the first song, he sang of raising women from the dead merely by shaking his pecker at their corpses.) In "Let's Rock a While" (1951) and "Rock, Rock, Rock" (1952), he helped to define the classic rock-'n'-roll lyric that was to eventually sweep the white folks off their feet a few years later. "Bad, Bad Whiskey" (1950), "Just One

More Drink" (1951), "Let Me Go Home, Whiskey" (1953), "One Scotch, One Bourbon, One Beer" (1953), "Good, Good Whiskey" (1953), "Vicious, Vicious Vodka" (1954), and "Juice, Juice" (1956) all dealt with Milburn's demon, booze. (He even had a rocker about drying out, the 1954 "Milk and Water.")

After "One Scotch, One Bourbon, One Beer" in 1953, Amos Milburn never had another hit. Aladdin Records folded in the late fifties. In 1960 Milburn had a single released by King Records; then, in 1962, he signed with the new Motown label. One single and one album, *Blues Boss*, were released by Motown the following year, but nothing happened. There was just no room in soul music for Milburn's bad-ass chicken-shack music.

Milburn continued to perform until 1968. In 1969 he had his first stroke. In 1970, lying on a couch in Cleveland, watching a football game on television, he had his second stroke, and emerged an invalid. He quit drinking and returned to Houston.

"I still got my Kool Super Longs," he told me. "I got my ice

With the Paul Williams band, New York, 1955.
(Courtesy of Jonas Bernholm)

water and my Coca-Cola. Don't allow no booze in my home, no sir. Somebody wanna visit me, they better leave their bottle at the door. I'm a Christian man now, and I leave it all up to the Lord. I figure if the Lord wanted me to quit these Kools, he'd let me know, like he let me know about the booze with them two strokes."

Four weeks before I talked with Amos, he had been on the operating table. "They took my leg off," he told me. "The one that used to stomp all that good rock 'n' roll, all that fine boogie-woogie on the old piano. They cut it clean off."

And there he was. The first great rock-'n'-roll piano man, living on Navy disability checks and Kool Super Longs. It had come to that.

Less than six months after I talked with him, I received word that Amos Milburn had died, on January 3, 1980.

At the bar, with Big Joe Turner. (Courtesy of Jonas Bernholm)

Roy Brown

Good Rockin' Tonight

Roy Brown, the man who wrote and first cut "Good Rockin' Tonight," and who had rocked his way to the top and fallen to the bottom before Elvis had ever even gotten laid, saw it like this: "I remember Colonel Parker making the statement, 'I believe the white kids want to hear rock 'n' roll, but I'm gonna have a white boy do it.' In other words: If you want to hear 'Good Rockin' Tonight,' I'm gonna have Elvis Presley do it. A lot of those guys did those things and copied the arrangements note for note, but that way it was accepted."

Brown remembers Elvis, whom he met only once, in 1954, as an unknown cracker punk trying to sneak onto the stage at one of Brown's gigs: "We used to play for the high sheriff in Tupelo, Mississippi. My bandleader, my guitar player at that time was Edgar Blanchard, from New Orleans—he's dead now—he loved to drink. Elvis came around. He wanted to sing, but Edgar wouldn't let him on the bandstand. Elvis discovered that Edgar liked to drink, so he got him a big bottle of moonshine—Tupelo was a dry town—and when I came back from changing my clothes at the sheriff's house, there was Elvis. He was up there playing and singing with them, nobody paying any attention to him.

"On my West Coast tour a few months later, Tommy Shelvin, my bass-player, said, 'Hey, man, there's a hillbilly singing your song.' Sure 'nuff, Elvis was singing this song with a hillbilly band. But he never did sell, because he hadn't become Elvis yet, y'know. Yeah, they're both dead now, old Edgar and old Elvis."

It's wise when listening to these characters to keep in mind Shakespeare's warning about "old men of less truth than tongue." But nothing can shake the truth from the fact that, like many others, Roy Brown was an originator of that strange, exalted thing, rock 'n' roll, for which Elvis and a few other kids received the credit.

Roy Brown was born in New Orleans on September 10, 1925. His mama, True Love Brown, part Algonquin, part black, was a choir director and organist. His daddy, Yancy Brown, was a plasterer and bricklayer. As the old man followed work, the family moved through the towns of rural Louisiana. Roy worked for a while in the sugar cane fields of Morgan City and New Iberia. He didn't hear the blues there, only spirituals.

His mother died when he was fourteen. Three years later, after finishing high school, Roy moved to Los Angeles. He became a boxer, winning sixteen of his eighteen professional welterweight matches. But the sight of blood made him sick, and he was forced to quit the fight game.

In 1945, at the Million Dollar Theater in L.A., Brown won an amateur singing contest by imitating Bing Crosby's versions of "San Antonio Rose" and "I Got Spurs That Jingle Jangle Jingle." Crosby was Roy Brown's favorite singer, and he's not ashamed of it. He says he heard no blues until the early forties, when he heard Billy Eckstine sing "Jelly Jelly" and Ella Johnson sing "When My Man Comes Home."

Brown returned to Louisiana and got his first steady singing job, at Billy Riley's Palace Park in Shreveport. He sang stuff like "Stardust" and "Blue Hawaii." Looking back, he feels he got the job because he was a novelty, a colored guy who sounded white—sort of the Elvis syndrome in reverse.

From Shreveport he went to Galveston, Texas, where he wrote the song that made him famous. "I think we had the first black group on radio in that area," he says, again bringing to mind the words of Shakespeare's "Sonnet XVII." "My theme was 'There's No You,' a Crosby thing. But I wrote a tune called 'Good Rockin' Tonight.' We added a trumpet player to the group. His name was Wilbert Brown, and when we did our radio

Roy Brown, back when a tie was a tie. (Courtesy of Jonas Bernholm)

show on KGBC he sang 'Good Rockin' Tonight.'" One fateful day, Wilbert fell sick and Roy sang the song. The audience loved the way Roy sang it, and it became a local hit. While in Galveston, he made his first record, for Gold Star.

Brown fled Galveston after he was caught fucking the girlfriend of the club owner he was working for. In New Orleans he ran into Cecil Gant, a fellow unsung-hero-to-be. Gant heard Brown's "Good Rockin' Tonight" and brought him to Jules Braun, who owned DeLuxe Records. Brown's first DeLuxe release, "Good Rockin' Tonight," was issued in September 1947.

Roy continued to record for DeLuxe for three years. During those years, his voice grew tougher, wilder. He was no longer

merely an exceptional pop singer—like Crosby, Sinatra, Prima, or Nat Cole—but one of the first real rock-'n'-roll voices. By the time he cut "Hard Luck Blues"—the most morbid Number 1 hit in the history of the R&B charts—in 1950, Brown had achieved a low-down range and power in his voice that few other singers then or since could equal.

King Records bought out his contract in 1950, and Brown found himself screwed in the process. After he finally went to BMI and the musician's union to retrieve his rightful royalties from King, he was blackballed. Following his 1951 "Big Town," Brown continued to record for King, but the hits came to an end and so did the big-money dates.

He left King, belatedly, in 1955. For the next two years he recorded for Imperial. His versions of Buddy Knox's "Party Doll" and Fats Domino's "Let the Four Winds Blow" were minor pop hits in 1957, but by 1959 Brown was so desperate he returned to King for two sessions. In 1960 and 1961 he cut four singles for the Home of the Blues label in Memphis. As irony might have it, these ill-starred records were produced by former Elvis sideman Scotty Moore.

The sixties were slow for Roy Brown. There were a few sessions for fly-by-night labels like DRA and Connie and Mobile. Chess cut four sides on him in 1963, but never released them. He became a door-to-door salesman, easing himself into the homes of older blacks with autographed pictures of the former star that was him. "I sold a lot of encyclopedias that way," he recalled.

Brown started recording again in 1967. There was an album for Bluesway, *Hard Times*; singles for local L.A. labels—Gert, Summit—and his own Tru-Love and Friendship labels. In 1971, the year after his successful appearance with Johnny Otis at the Monterey Festival, there were a pair of singles on Mercury. Although much of this work was as fine as his work of twenty years before, it was less lucrative than selling encyclopedias. In 1978 he issued an album, *The Cheapest Price in Town*, on his own Faith label. It was one of the best and sleaziest albums of the year, but probably no more than a few thousand people heard it.

Then again, like the man says, what the hell. "I drive a new Monte Carlo, my wife drives a Chevron. I'm very happy," he explained.

He didn't have to worry about trade-ins. His heart gave out on May 25, 1981, in Los Angeles.

Louis Prima

Gleeby Rhythm Is Born

Louis Prima often spoke of writing a book about his life and times. Had he done so, his memory would not have to be contented with the few meager and hastily written paragraphs that follow. Indeed, were it not for the kindness of my own heart, his memory would have not even these.

Prima presaged the Rock 'n' Roll of the Ridiculous. He perceived and embraced, in all its tutti-frutti glory, the spirit of post-literate, made-for-television America. His was a brave new world of chrome, not gold; of Armstrong linoleum, not Carrara marble; of heptalk, not meaningful dialogue (what did words matter to Louis, when noise could be made instead?). It was a world in which everything came down to broads, booze, and money, with plenty of linguini on the side. It was the modern world, the senseless prefab Eden from which rock 'n' roll is in part descended and devolved. To hear Louis Prima sing is not only to begin to comprehend this world, but also to begin to comprehend why no one in a tweed suit ever got laid within ten miles of downtown Newark.

Eschewing cheap sensationalism, I make no mention of the filthy procreative deed which led to Mr. Prima's birth, but begin my account with the birth itself. He was born on December 7, 1910, in New Orleans. He studied the violin for seven years, and at the age of ten he won the first prize in an amateur fiddling contest. While still young and pure and incapable of the filthy deed, he put aside his violin and lifted to his lips a trumpet. By the time he was twelve, he and his fifteen-year-old brother,

Leon, were leading their own band, playing at various functions throughout the Crescent City.

After graduating from the city's Jesuit high school, Louis and his band, which was then called the Collegiates, began performing regularly at the Saenger Theatre. When his brother opened up a nightclub, the Beverly Gardens, Louis was the first act Leon hired, and until 1930 the young man with a horn trod regularly between the Saenger Theatre and the Beverly Gardens.

His innocence was behind him now. Soon he married a young lady named Louise Polizzi. What happened on their wedding night I leave to your imagination. His hometown was no longer enough. He had a lot of living to do.

In 1932 Prima traveled to Cleveland, where he played for a brief time with Red Nichols. In September 1933 he went to Chicago, where he and two other musicians recorded two songs for the Bluebird label. These recordings, hot versions of "Chinatown" and "Dinah," were released under the fitting name of the Hotcha Trio.

In August 1934 Prima moved to New York, where he organized a seven-piece band, Louis Prima and His New Orleans Gang. They began recording for Brunswick-Vocalion in September of that year. By March 1935 they were playing regularly at the new Famous Door on 52nd Street, one of the most prestigious jazz clubs in town.

In 1936 he traveled west to Los Angeles, where he successfully exploited his musical talents and *faccia bruta* in a series of films. First was the RKO short *Swing It*, followed by several full-length features: *Rhythm on the Range* (1936); *You Can't Have Everything* (1939); *Start Cheering*, with Broderick Crawford and the Three Stooges (1938); and *Rose of Washington Square*, with Tyrone Power and Al Jolson (1939). It was while in California that he wrote and, in February 1936, recorded "Sing, Sing, Sing," which Benny Goodman cut and made famous the following year. Prima's last Brunswick-Vocalion session took place in the summer of 1937. In January 1938, in New York, and again in December, in Los Angeles, Prima recorded for Decca.

Prima recorded for the Varsity label in January 1940. By now

Louis, nel mezzo cammin di sua vita. (Courtesy of KICKS)

he had mastered a singing style the likes of which the world had never heard. It was, like his music itself, jazz-influenced, yet it struck one's ears as decidedly strange. He sang in English, granted; but it was an English heavily interlaced with the Neapolitan slang of his greaseball roots. When all else failed, he simply commenced making odd sounds. Long before there was a Little Richard, there were people sitting around listening to Louis Prima records, asking, "What was that? What did he say?"

When he recorded for Varsity, he rechristened his band Louis Prima and His Gleeby Rhythm Orchestra. Suitably, one of the first songs he recorded under this new name was the mysterious "Gleeby Rhythm Is Born."

Gleeby rhythm is born.
Gleeby rhythm is born;

Gleeby rhythm comes on,
Gleeby rhythm comes on;
Oh, gleeby rhythm is born.
The gleebs are rompin',
The gleebs are stompin';
Oh, gleeby rhythm is born.

Most men would rest upon their laurels after such an achievement. But not Louis. Onward he blew and howled, towards the rhythm beyond gleeb. He went through record companies like they were candy. There was a second Varsity session, in the spring of 1940. He made one record for Okeh in September 1941; then, in 1943, went to Hit, where he recorded "Oh Marie" and "Angelina," the first of the many mutant-greaseball favorites for which he would become known. (It was also in 1943 that Louis recorded his big-band medley of "Just a Gigolo" and "I Ain't Got Nobody," for an armed-forces V-Disc.) In 1944 Hit gave way to the Majestic label, and it was with Majestic, where he stayed through 1947, that Louis had his first hit, "Bell-Bottom Trousers," in the summer of 1945. He recorded "Just a Gigolo," covered Louis Jordan's "Caldonia," and revived "Sing, Sing, Sing" for Majestic; and it was during the Majestic years that the torrent of ginzolalia truly commenced: besides reissues of "Oh Marie" and "Angelina" (the latter Hit master was recycled thrice by Majestic; the revived Varsity, run by Eli Oberstein of Hit, would reissue it a fourth time, in 1949), there were "Please No Squeeza da Banana," "Felicia No Capicia," "Baciagaloop (Makes Love on the Stoop)," and others. In the summer of 1947 he went to RCA-Victor, where he had a hit that fall with "Civilization," pissed on M.D.S. (Meaningful-Dialogue Syndrome) in "Say It with a Slap," and, in the spring of 1949, made his first records with Keely Smith. In 1949–50 he recorded sixteen sides for Mercury, the poignant "Tears on My Tie" among them. He released half a dozen singles, including the hit "Oh, Babe!" (covered by Wynonie Harris), "Good-Boogdi-Googi," and "Pizza and Beer," on his own Robin Hood label in late 1950 and early 1951. He made a few bucks with each of these labels, then moved

on. Nothing, it seemed, could contain him. (He went through wives fairly well, too. After divorcing La Polizzi, he married an Alma Raase. Divorcing her, he married Tracelene Barrett, a twenty-one-year-old secretary, in June 1948. Perhaps the procreative deed is addictive to some of us. But, alas, we have no time here to pause and ponder, nor to weep. Like the man whom we honor, we must move on.)

In October 1951 Prima signed with Columbia Records, for which he recorded some of his most outstanding and intriguing work, such as "The Bigger the Figure" (1952), a salacious homage to fat broads based on the "Largo al Factotum" aria from Rossini's *Barber of Seville*. (The flip side, "Boney Bones," dealt with a lady of leaner dimensions.) It was also in 1952 that Prima married his fourth wife, twenty-year-old Dorothy Keely Gambardella—better known as Smith—the Virginia girl who had been working with him since late 1948. (Keely Smith was not the first female vocalist that Prima employed. As early as 1939 he had been performing duets with Lily Ann Carol, who was billed as Miss Personality of Song. He had replaced her in 1947 with Cathy Allen, whose real name was Catherine Ricciardi.)

Prima stayed with Columbia through 1953, but there were no hits. This mattered little, however, for by 1954 Louis Prima and Keely Smith were one of the most popular acts in Las Vegas, commanding nearly $10,000 per week for their shows at the Sahara. (A full-page ad run by the Sahara in a December 1955 issue of *Variety* quoted none other than Howard Hughes on the subject of Prima and Smith: "The more I see them, the more I enjoy them." What a way with words.)

An interesting little story concerning Louis Prima in Las Vegas was told in Ovid Demaris's 1981 book, *The Last Mafioso: The Treacherous World of Jimmy Fratianno*. The man being quoted here was Fratianno's associate John Roselli: "'Now this really kills me. One day Beldon sees this dealer with a black eye and the guy tells him he's fucking Keely in the dressing room when suddenly he feels someone licking his balls. He jumps up and Louie punches him in the eye.'"

After Columbia, Louis recorded one single for Jubilee, two for

the fleeting Equity label, two more for Decca. Toward the end of 1956, he signed with Capitol. Singing a Son-of-Sam version of "That Old Black Magic" with Keely Smith in 1958, he had his first hit since 1950. One more Capitol hit followed, "I've Got You Under My Skin," in 1959. Louis and Keely starred that year in the movie *Hey Boy! Hey Girl!*, then left Capitol for Dot in the spring. While at Dot, Louis recorded the moving paean to his prick, "My Cucuzza" (1959), and had the worst hit of his career, "Wonderland by Night" (1960). Indeed, now, at the age of fifty, Louis seemed to be losing the power he had once possessed. Gleeby rhythm was nearly dead.

The Prima-Smith act broke up in October 1961, when Keely filed for divorce on the grounds of "extreme mental cruelty." Prima's comment was terse: "Eh, fucka the Irish *troia*, eh?"

Sam Butera stuck with him, and he took on a new broad, Nica Ventura, to sing when he played the Desert Inn in January 1962. (Keely made her solo debut four months later, in May, at the Riviera.) He returned to his roots, performing in March 1962 at the old Saenger Theatre in New Orleans. Signing again with Capitol, he made the last great album of his life, *The Wildest Comes Home*, released in June of the same year. But there were no more hits, and slowly Mr. Prima became naught but a memory except among the faithful who gathered before him in Vegas and Tahoe to hear him sing his words of magic.

> *I got a gal, she's six an' a half feet tall;*
> *Y'oughta see my baby, she's six an' a*
> *half feet tall;*
> *She sleeps wit' her head in the bed*
> *an' her—ooo*—come-si-chiama
> *in the hall.*

In 1965 he took on a new wife and vocalist, Gia Maione, with whom he performed the deed. The next ten years passed as in a dream, the great man being reduced to deeds such as supplying the voice for King Louis, the cartoon orangutan in Walt Disney's 1969 *Jungle Book*. There were recordings, dire recordings, for Hanna Barbera, Buena Vista, ABC, Kama Sutra, Gallery, and

finally his own Las Vegas–based Prima label, which issued one last berserk gasp of glory, *The Prima Generation '72*, featuring the surrealist broken-English splendor of bassist Rolly Di Iorio's refrainless rendering of "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" as well as Prima's fast version of Hank Williams's "Cold, Cold Heart."

In October 1975 Louis Prima's head was opened for the purpose of removing a brain tumor. He fell into a coma, and he lay in stillness in a New Orleans nursing home. On the bright, hot day of August 24, 1978, he died. And with him, not only gleeby rhythm but much, much else besides.

Ming and Ling

The Chinese Hillbillies

Confucius tells us, "Knowledge is to know men." Professor Uriah Konje, in *The Lucky Star Dream Book*, under "Chinaman," tells us, "To dream of one denotes riches and prosperity accompanied by the picture of good health." (How much more auspicious to encounter two of them!) Let us, then, know Ming and Ling; let us, then, dream.

By some accounts, they were related. Ming was Ling's father, according to Jadin Wong, who was active in the closed world of Oriental nightclub entertainment in the forties—a world that began, in a way, with the opening of Charlie Low's Forbidden City in San Francisco in 1938. Our first glimpse of them is in the summer and fall of 1945, when they worked the Latin Quarter in New York. It was a trio then:

"Ming, Ling and Hoo Shee, Oriental hillbilly trio comprising two men and a gal follow to rock them with laughter, doing gags, songs and instrumentation. Baritone's take-offs of Sinatra, Crosby and Ink Spots send them off to good applause," observed a review in the July 25, 1945, issue of *Variety*.

In early 1946, New York entrepreneur Tom Ball took over the old London Club for a reported $30,000, decked it with lanterns, and reopened it as the China Doll. *Variety*, commenting on the new "Oriental slant" of the joint, reported in its April 10 issue that, while some of the China Doll's acts were newly arrived from San Francisco, Ming and Ling were veterans of the Manhattan club circuit. "They do solidly."

In the spring of 1947, we find them at the Oriental in Chicago,

as part of the half-hour stage show featured with the Groucho Marx movie *Copacabana*. "Ming and Ling, gaudily attired Chinese hillbillies, are standout," *Variety* remarked in its June 18 issue. After versions of "My Sing Song Girl" and "The Red River Valley," Ling performed "his battle of the crooners, with imitations of Sinatra and Crosby, and although he doesn't sound much like either, reveals good pipes. Also does take-off on Jolson and joins Wing [*sic*] for impresh of Ink Spots for plenty of applause."

That fall, they are back at the China Doll as headliners. "Ming, the vocalist, takes off on hillbilly tunes, Scotch airs, then does a series of sock carbons on Frank Sinatra, Crosby and the Ink Spots," reported the October 4 *Variety*. "Encore is an unusual item with a rendition of the Yiddish song 'Eli, Eli,' then with another reprise take-off on Al Jolson singing 'April Showers.'"

Our next-to-last glimpse is the most intriguing. Reviewing their show at the Café Tirana Uptown, *Variety* of December 7, 1949, tells of "Ming's wild new version of 'Milkcow Blues Boogie,' followed by impresh of Sinatra crooning 'The Hucklebuck' in Chinese. Crowd was gaga."

In the spring of 1951, Ming and Ling headlined the China Doll Revue at the Desert Inn, Las Vegas. Since then, no trace of them has been found.

Who were these mysterious guys, these "gaudily attired Chinese hillbillies" who drift so tantalizingly through the mists of those faded, forgotten years? There are some, indeed, who say that there were several Ming and Lings; some, indeed, who say that the Ming and Ling known as the Chinese hillbillies were not the same Ming and Ling who made three obscure records in the late forties, records so strange that they defy description. The 1950 Ming and Ling DeLuxe recording of Kokomo Arnold's 1935 "Milkcow Blues Boogie," for example, bears so little resemblance to its source—or to subsequent versions of it: Cliff Bruner's (1937), Bob Crosby's (1938), Johnny Lee Wills's (1941), Moon Mullican's (1946)—that it seems more a mutation than a variation. Elvis's recording of the song, four years later, pales by comparison. Their "Eggroll Eatin' Mama," released by

Carousel in June 1949, a torrent of boogie-woogie wailing ("my eggroll has gone soggy/She won't take it in her mouth") and unreined baritone-sax blasts (suggesting the work of David McRae, then recording with Jesse Stone for RCA-Victor), seems both a foreshadowing and a culmination, a prophesy and a denial.

But it is the concept of the gaudily attired Chinese hillbilly that lingers above all else. American music was unlike that of any other nation. (Of course, rock 'n' roll changed all that. Since the late fifties, every country has pretended to be American when it sang—at least, that is, until the seventies, when Americans started pretending to be limeys pretending to be Americans.) Blacks emulated whites. Whites emulated blacks. Singers from Mississippi dressed up as Hollywood cowboys, and Chicago sharpies as dirt-poor rural crackers. In this ridiculous but deeply ingrained context, the gaudily attired Chinese hillbilly seems to shine forth as the apotheosis, the essence and two-bit substance, of the American rock-'n'-roll Everyman. Within the soul of each and every one of us the gaudily attired Chinese hillbilly dwells. We are one, indivisible, sock carbons under God.

The Treniers

Their God Wore Shades

The Trenier twins, Claude and Clifford, were born in Mobile, Alabama, on July 14, 1919, the third and fourth children brought into this vale of jive by Denny and Olivia Trenier, whose spawn eventually numbered ten. It was a musical family. Denny Trenier, in between ejaculations, played the baritone horn with the Excelsior Band, one of the legendary marching and funerary brass groups in the deep South; Olivia played piano; and their children took to the rhythm at a tender age.

In the fall of 1939 Claude and Clifford went north to Alabama State College, in Montgomery. Ostensibly, the twins were pursuing the study of education, preparing for careers in teaching.

"But, really, we weren't studyin' nothin'," Claude told me when I tracked him down in Atlantic City in August 1982. "We were there for the music. Our older brother Buddy had been doing some singing in little clubs around Mobile, and we saw that he had a lot of girls. It looked good to us.

"Alabama State at that time had some fine musicians. Erskine Hawkins had come out of there with a band, the 'Bama State Collegians, in '36. We hooked up with a few guys who were also studyin' nothin' at the time: Sonny Stitt, who went on to make quite a name for himself in jazz; Joe Newman, the trumpet-player, who connected with Lionel Hampton and Wynonie Harris a few years later; Gene Gilbeaux, who played piano; and Don Hill, who's been playin' alto sax with us ever since.

"When they threw Cliff and me out of college in 1941, we took the band with us. But it wasn't long before the World War II draft busted things up."

In 1944 Jimmie Lunceford, whose music the Trenier twins had been listening to since their early teens, hired Claude as his vocalist. And on December 27 of that year, in New York, he cut his first record, singing "I'm Gonna See My Baby" and "That Someone Must Be You" with the Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra. Soon after the record was released, Lunceford also hired Cliff Trenier. On February 27, 1945, in New York, the twins sang together on record for the first time, on Lunceford's recording of "Buzz Buzz Buzz." (This record, however, was not released until 1949.)

Towards the end of 1945 Cliff returned to Mobile, and Claude, leaving the Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra, settled in Los Angeles, where, on January 29, 1946, he recorded "Young Man's Blues" (which Wynonie Harris had cut for Apollo the previous summer) with the Barney Bigard Quintet for Lamplighter Records. Soon after this came another single, "Weird Nightmare," with Charlie Mingus & His Orchestra, on the Excelsior label.

Claude found work singing for $25 a night with Joe Liggins and His Honeydrippers at the Casablanca, an after-hours joint on San Pedro Street. From there he moved across the street to Cafe Society, another after-hours club. When Wynonie Harris was fired from the Club Alabam for cussing out the audience, Claude took his place. Finally he got his first big booking—at the Melody Club—where he stayed for over a year, his pay rising to $1200 a week.

In 1947 Claude brought Cliff, Don Hill, and Gene Gilbeaux out to the coast. Picking up a drummer and a bass-player, they hit the road, billed first as the Trenier Twins & the Gene Gilbeaux Quartet, then simply as the Trenier Twins. By the time that the Trenier Twins signed their first recording deal—with Mercury, late in 1947—they had developed a unique sound, derived somewhat from Jimmie Lunceford's 2/4 and Louis Jordan's shuffle; more so from the sort of ineffable knowledge that can be had only by long years of studyin' nothin'; and, just as important, a style of performance—involving everything from a cappella shrieking to acrobatics to football formations—the likes of which had not been known. ("When we used to jam at Billy

Berg's club in Hollywood," Claude recalled, "all those bebop musicians would shy away from us. They thought we weren't cool because we jumped around and shouted and all that.") It was the owner of a Chicago jazz club, the Blue Note, who first thought to bill them as "The Rockin' Rollin' Treniers" in the summer of 1949 (not long after their older brother Buddy had joined them).

The Trenier Twins stayed with Mercury until 1950, putting out five records in all. After one single for London ("Why Did You Get So High, Shorty?"), the Treniers, as they now called themselves, were signed to a long-term contract with Okeh by Danny Kessler, who had been put in charge of that reactivated label's R&B product. By then their younger brother Milt, who had been singing in Oklahoma, had also become part of the group.

Their first Okeh release, cut on May 21, 1951, was "Go! Go! Go!," one of the first real rock-'n'-roll records to come out of New York, and "Plenty of Money," a slow city blues sung by

Claude and Cliff Trenier, seated, with Johnny Otis and his Orchestra. (Courtesy of Skippy Trenier)

Their name in lights, Times Square, 1949. (Courtesy of Skippy Trenier)

Claude in the voice that had prompted Jimmie Lunceford to call him the Sepia Sinatra.

The Treniers' Okeh records contained some of the best rock 'n' roll to be heard in the early fifties: "Old Woman Blues" (1951), "Hadacol, That's All" (1952), "Rockin' on Saturday Night" (1952), "Rockin' Is Our Business" (1953), "Rock-a-Bea-

tin' Boogie" (1954), "Get Out the Car" (1955), and more. (Nothing to write home about in terms of music, but of no mean interest to serious students of nothin' is "Say Hey," which they made with Willie Mays in 1954, the summer Mays was voted National League MVP. In any case, it beats hell out of Mickey Mantle and Teresa Brewer.) The best record of them all was the two-sided affront to decorum which the Treniers cut in Chicago towards the end of 1952.

I don't wanna eat and I don't wanna
sleep;
I got a yen that I'm dyin' to please,
Till I get weak in the knees—
Gonna get me that poon-tang!
Poon-tang, poon-tang, poon-tang . . .

So went the plaintive "Poon-Tang!" The flip-side, "Hi-Yo, Silver," all drums and saxophone and chanting, seemed to invoke not so much the Lone Ranger as it did that most exalted turbaned lord on high Dooji Wooji.

Hi-yo, hi-yo, Silver, ride;
Hi-yo, hi-yo, Silver, ride.
Hi-yo, hi-yo, Silver, ride;
Hi-yo, hi-yo, Silver, ride.
Now, I'm the lone stranger
from across the tracks;
I got a pocketful of money
and a Cadillac.

Just sit in the saddle
and hold on tight
'Cause, baby, we're really
gonna rock tonight.

The Treniers stayed with Okeh till 1955, when Columbia retired the label. Four singles followed on Epic along with an album, *The Treniers on TV*, released in the summer of 1955. Although a few of their records had sold well—"Go! Go! Go!,"

"Hadacol, That's All," "Get Out the Car"—none of them had been hits. The trouble, in Claude Trenier's opinion, was that the Treniers were basically a live act. Entering a studio, much of the fire and madness died. On stage the Treniers could stop in the middle of "Hi-Yo, Silver" and go into a parody of the Julius La Rosa hit "Eh Cumpari," transforming it into "Eh Cumpari, You Ain't Nothin' but a Hound Dog," then go back into "Hi-Yo, Silver"—as they often did in their 1953 performances. But this wasn't the sort of thing that could be transferred well to recording.

In 1956 the group cut two singles for Vik; three for Brunswick in 1957. In 1958 there were a pair of lackluster singles and an album, *The Treniers Souvenir Album*, on Dot. (It was also in 1958 that the Treniers accompanied Jerry Lee Lewis to England as the opening act of that disastrous tour.) There was a single for the DOM label in 1959. Four years later there was an embarrassing "After Hours Bossa Nova" on Hermitage; then, in 1964, one last single, on Ronn.

But that wasn't the end. Guys who really know the ins and outs of nothin' are hard to keep down. The Treniers kept rocking the clubs, and they kept making money, mostly in Vegas, the Caribbean, and Atlantic City. In the mid-seventies they put out two albums on their own Mobile label, *The Treniers Live and Wild at the Flamingo* and *The Fabulous Treniers*, both of which hold up better than many records of that silly and unmissed decade.

The group today consists of Claude and Cliff, Buddy, and their nephew Skip (Milt left to open a club in Chicago), all of whom sing; Don Hill, the alto-sax man from way back when; Jack Holland on piano; Stan Richards on guitar; Chip Cole on bass; and Dave Akins on drums. When Don Hill sat down to do his income tax in 1982, he discovered that the Treniers had played 355 nights in 1981. And the night before I spoke with Claude, the Treniers had them packed six deep at the bar at Resorts International.

At the age of sixty-three, Claude Trenier feels that he and his brothers will be rocking for another ten years before they call it quits. Looking back, he is well aware that the Treniers

were making rock 'n' roll long before most people knew what to call it.

"I remember we were playing the Riptide in Wildwood, New Jersey, in the summer of 1950. Bill Haley had a cowboy band, the Saddlemen, that played right across the street from us. He used to come in and watch us. He asked us what we called the music we were playing. And we told him. Hell, we told him."

Stick McGhee

Spo-Dee-O-Dee:

How to Get It, How To Use It

In life, one encounters very few truths of the absolute sort. The sages of Hellas enumerate but three. The first: Everything flows, nothing abides. The second: Give them an inch, they'll take a mile. The third: All things can be reduced to moisture, whence they came. A fourth truth has been often attributed to Thales of Miletus. Whether this attribution is valid or not is of little matter since the alleged truth was disproven two years ago by several brave women wearing Undie-Leggs. I, for one, applaud them.

But the sages of Hellas knew nothing of the song whose title is "Drinkin' Wine, Spo-Dee-O-Dee"; nor did they know that this song inspired more great recordings than any other song in the history of what people on television refer to as the rock-'n'-roll field. We must excuse the sages, for they passed on long before the song we speak of; long, even, before television itself.

Granville McGhee, the author of "Drinkin' Wine, Spo-Dee-O-Dee" and much else, was born on March 23, 1917, in Knoxville, Tennessee. His elder, more famous, and less gifted brother, Brownie McGhee, was stricken with polio as a child. To get around, young Brownie built a wooden cart with wheels, and assigned his little brother the duty of pushing him along by means of a stick. Granville took to carrying the stick with him at all times, and thus became known as Stick McGhee. Already this story is interesting.

Stick began to play the guitar when he was about thirteen. He quit high school after his freshman year and took a job at East-

man Kodak, where his dad worked. He left that job about 1940, traveling to Portsmouth, Virginia, and then to New York, where he joined the Army soon after the United States declared war on Japan in 1941. Driving a truck in a laundry unit, Stick was wounded in the Pacific. After further service in Japan and Korea, he returned home, a hero. This and a nickel enabled him to use a pay phone.

In the army, Stick's colored drinking buddies had a song they would sing towards the close of their periodic excesses:

Drinkin' that mess is our delight,
And when we get drunk, start fightin' all night.
Knockin' out windows and tearin' down doors,
Drinkin' half-gallons and callin' for more.
Drinkin' wine, motherfucker, drinkin' wine!
Goddam!
Drinkin' wine, motherfucker, drinkin' wine!
Goddam!
Drinkin' wine, motherfucker, drinkin' wine!
Goddam!
Pass that bottle to me!

And so forth. After the war, in 1946, Stick and his brother, Brownie (who had been making records since 1944), got together to cut a version of this cherished drinking-song for Harlem Records, an affiliate of Southern Records headquartered at 4823 Cottage Grove Avenue in Chicago. They cleaned up the song a bit and called it "Drinkin' Wine, Spo-Dee-O-Dee." (Sam Theard, the black comedian and coauthor of "Let the Good Times Roll," had been using Spo-Dee-O-Dee as a stage name since the thirties and had made a record called "Spo-Dee-O-Dee" for Vocalian in 1937.)

Released in January 1947, and priced to sell at 49¢, Stick's record went nowhere. But, two years later, on February 14, 1949, he remade "Drinkin' Wine, Spo-Dee-O-Dee" for Atlantic. The record hit the R&B charts the following month and eventually rose to Number 3.

The first cover version of Stick's record was by Lionel Hamp-

ton, featuring the great blues shouter Sonny Parker, on Decca. (Decca also bought Stick's original 1946 recording from Harlem and issued that.) Next came a version by Wynonie Harris, recorded for King on the 13th of April. The third cover was a hillbilly-bop rendition by Loy Gordon & His Pleasant Valley Boys, cut on August 23 for Stick's label, Atlantic. "Drinkin' Wine, Spo-Dee-O-Dee" continued to be cut throughout the fifties: by Malcolm Yelvington, for Sun, in 1954; by Johnny Burnette, for Coral, in 1957; by Jerry Lee Lewis, for Sun, in 1959. (Jerry Lee cut the song again, for Smash, in 1964, and for Mercury, in 1973.)

Although only two of these many versions—Wynonie Harris's 1949 cover and Jerry Lee's 1973 recording—achieved anything like the commercial success of the original, the odd thing is that they're all magnificent; I can't think of another song that exists in so many great varieties. And don't give me any of that Hank Williams shit, either, because I don't want to hear it.

Stick McGhee continued to make records for Atlantic, but his only other hit was an instrumental cover of the 1951 country hit "Tennessee Waltz," to which title he affixed the word "Blues." There were some hot ones—"Drank Up All the Wine Last Night" and "Venus Blues" in 1950; "Let's Do It" and "One Monkey Don't Stop No Show" in 1951—but they didn't pay the bills. He cut a record for London in early 1951. That failed, too.

In 1952 Stick moved from Atlantic to Essex for one miserable, failed record ("My Little Rose"); then, in 1953, to King, where he made a lot of great rock 'n' roll—"Whiskey, Women and Loaded Dice," "Dealin' from the Bottom," "Jungle Juice," "Double Crossin' Liquor," "Get Your Mind Out of the Gutter"—but very little money. Leaving King, he cut a record for Savoy in 1955; but his heart was no longer in it.

Stick retired from the music business, but not from drink. In 1960 his brother convinced him to cut a record for Herald in New York. While both sides of that record, "Money Fever" and "Sleep-in Job," were as nasty and fine as anything to be heard that year, they didn't happen. Stick went back into retirement. Further back this time.

Stick McGhee died in the Bronx V.A. Hospital on August 15, 1961, of cancer. He was barely forty-four years old. He didn't have much when he went, but what he had he left to Brownie's son. It was an old guitar, and within its chords and creaks and resonances, somewhere, lay the power of spo-dee-o-dee. That's a fact.

Young Bill Haley

The Lounge Act That Transcendeth All Knowing

Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock" is the biggest hit in the history of rock 'n' roll. It has sold more copies—over 25 million, according to the *Guinness Book of World Records*—than any other rock record, and has been the popular anthem of the fifties for a quarter of a century now, from *The Blackboard Jungle* to *Happy Days*. In light of this, it might seem odd to describe Bill Haley as an unsung hero of rock 'n' roll, but the truth is that it is what Bill Haley did before "Rock Around the Clock," rather than that silly song itself, that deserves recognition.

William John Clifton Haley was born on July 6, 1925, in Highland Park, Michigan. When he was seven, he moved with his family to Wilmington, Delaware. Not long after, Haley built and began to play a homemade guitar. At the age of thirteen he got his first paying job, performing at a local auction for a dollar a night. Two years later he left home and picked up work as a hillbilly singer with various bands in rural Pennsylvania.

In Hartford, Connecticutt, Haley met up with a country band called the Downhomers, who had recently lost a member, Kenny Roberts, to the draft army. Haley replaced Roberts, and when the Downhomers cut a record called "We're Recruiting" for Vogue in 1944, he finally had something to call home about.

After parting with the Downhomers, Haley got a job as a disc-jockey at WSNJ in Bridgeport, New Jersey, where he was often known as Yodeling Bill Haley. In 1948 Haley moved across the Delaware River to station WPWA in Chester, Pennsylvania,

where he remained as musical director until 1954. Bill Haley & the Four Aces of Western Swing, the band Haley formed after moving to Chester, cut their first records, for the local Cowboy label, in 1948. These records were mostly cover versions of recent country bits, such as George Morgan's "Candy Kisses," Red Foley's "Tennessee Border," and Hank Williams's "Too Many Parties, Too Many Pals."

Late in 1949, after cutting one record for Center (another local label), Haley renamed his group Bill Haley & the Saddlemen. In late 1949 this group cut two records for the Keystone label. In September of that year Haley succeeded in selling masters to Atlantic Records in New York, which released his "Why Do I Cry Over You" and "I'm Gonna Dry Ev'ry Tear with a Kiss" with little promotion and little success.

All of Haley's recordings through 1950 were common country records with their roots in slick Western swing. But by 1951 Haley had begun to forsake country music. He took off the cowboy hat he had worn since his Yodeling Bill Haley days, and began to cultivate the appearance of a hepcat—or, more precisely, the appearance of a hepcat who resided in Chester, Pennsylvania. He fashioned a spit curl upon his forehead. He put on a garish dinner jacket. he beheld himself and saw that it was good.

When Bill Haley & the Saddlemen signed with Holiday, a Philadelphia label operated by Dave Miller, in 1951, the first record they cut was a version of the outlandishly tough "Rocket '88'," which had been a Number 1 R&B hit earlier that year for Jackie Brenston and His Delta Cats. (Years later Sam Phillips, who produced the Brenston record and leased it to Chess, reflected that "Rocket '88'" was the first true rock-'n'-roll hit.)

Although some of his Holiday recordings leaned more heavily on country music than on R&B—such as the 1952 "Jukebox Cannonball," which fit hepster lyrics, not too successfully, to Roy Acuff's "Wabash Cannonball"—most of Haley's efforts throughout 1951–52 were inspired by the R&B charts. In 1951, with a female voice identified only as Loretta, he cut duet ver-

Young Bill Haley, second from left, in a group called the Range Drifters, c. 1948. (Author's collection)

sions of the Griffin Brothers' "Pretty Baby" and Memphis Slim's "I'm Crying." Both songs continue to stand as examples of his best work.

Haley began recording for Essex, another Dave Miller label in Philadelphia, in 1952. It was then that he began calling his group Bill Haley and His Comets, or, on a handfull of Essex records, Bill Haley with Haley's Comets (just, one presumes, to be sure you didn't miss the point).

The first Essex release was "Icy Heart," obviously inspired by "Cold, Cold Heart," the Hank Williams hit of the previous year. But the flip side of "Icy Heart" was "Rock the Joint," a wild, fiery rocker—not merely a cover of an R&B hit (Jimmy Preston's

1949 original was on Gotham, another Philadelphia independent), but one of the first instances of a white boy really getting down to the heart of hep.

Bill Haley's first hit came in the spring of 1953. "Crazy, Man, Crazy" rose to Number 15 on the pop charts at a time when "Song from Moulin Rouge" by Percy Faith was Number 1. There had been rock-'n'-roll records on the pop charts before, going back to 1951 and "Sixty-Minute Man" by the Dominoes; but "Crazy, Man, Crazy" was the first white rock hit. The trouble was—and is—that it was nowhere near as good, as heartfelt, as "Rock the Joint." Within a year, Bill Haley had gone from being one of the first blue-eyed rockers to the first decadent show-biz rocker. In other words, he had played out the entire history of rock 'n' roll about two years before anybody ever heard of rock 'n' roll.

Largely on the basis of "Crazy, Man, Crazy," Haley was signed by Decca in 1954. On April 12 of that year, in New York, Bill Haley and the Comets cut "(We're Gonna) Rock Around the Clock." The song had been written in 1953 by two Tin Pan Alley veterans, lyricist Max Freedman and composer Jimmy DeKnight. Freedman, born in 1895, had written "Souix City Sue" and "Song of India." DeKnight was really James Myers of Myers Music, a New York publishing firm. Haley had known DeKnight since the late forties, and had cut several of his songs back in those early days. "(We're Gonna) Rock Around the Clock" was released as the flip side of "Thirteen Women" in May 1954. Despite a full-page ad in *Billboard*, the record went unnoticed.

Haley went back into the studio and cut a cover of Joe Turner's "Shake, Rattle and Roll," which had been issued in April and was now heading fast up the R&B charts. Haley's "Shake, Rattle and Roll" was released in June of 1954. The August 7 issue of *Billboard* carried an ad for the record, in which Decca billed Haley and the Comets as "The Nation's 'Rockingest' Rhythm Group." (This same issue of *Billboard* also carried the first review of Elvis's first single, which had been recorded the month before.) "Shake, Rattle and Roll" broke into the Top Ten, but that didn't alter the fact that it was an inferior record. The way Haley

The Cowboy Bill Songbook, 1950. (Courtesy of KICKS)

and the Decca boys had censored the original sexy lyrics was shameful.

Haley's next two singles, "Dim, Dim the Lights" and "Birth of the Boogie," were Top Twenty hits. When Evan Hunter's 1954 novel, *The Blackboard Jungle*, was made into a movie, Jimmy DeKnight was chosen as the film's technical advisor. He dug up the failed "Rock Around the Clock" for the movie's central song. The movie was released in March 1955, and the rest is history, of a sort.

Bill Haley continued to have very minor hits with Decca until 1960, when he went to Warner Brothers, sundry other labels, and

oblivion. Plainly, by the end of 1955 he had been superceded by Elvis Presley, whose fame continued to rise throughout the late fifties as Haley's fell. This is the way it should have been. He died, out of his mind, in Harlingen, Texas, on February 9, 1981.

"We use country and Western instruments," Haley was quoted as saying in a 1955 collection of sheet music, "play rhythm and blues tunes and the result is"—hold your breath—"pop music." He didn't even know what to call it, for the love of Christ.

But the fact remains: Bill Haley was there first, and he helped set the stage for Elvis and all that came in his wake. For that, Bill Haley, who walked among us, deserves, as do all things hep, to be honored.

Roy Hall

See, We Was All Drunk

Roy Hall was born on May 7, 1922, in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, a backwoods town about twenty miles from the Tennessee line, near the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. An old colored man taught him to play piano, and to drink. By the time Roy turned twenty-one, he knew that he was the best drunken piano-player in Big Stone Gap, and armed with the pride and confidence that this knowledge gave him, he departed the town of his birth to seek fame in those dreamed-of places beyond: Jasper, Slant, Nicklesville, Weber City, and Bristol.

Roy made it to Bristol and farther, pumping boogie-woogie in every Virginia, Tennessee, or Alabama beer-joint that had a piano. He played those pianos fast and hard and sinful, like that colored man who had taught him back in Big Stone Gap; but he sang like the hillbilly that he was. Wherever he went, the people told him they had never heard a country singer quite like him, and they bought him drinks and gave him silver coins towards closing time.

He organized his own band, Roy Hall and His Cohutta Mountain Boys (Cohutta was part of the Appalachians, in the shadows of whose foothills he had been raised up). It was a five-piece band, with Tommy Odum on lead guitar, Bud White on rhythm guitar, Flash Griner on bass, and Frankie Brumbalough on fiddle. Roy pounded the piano and did most of the singing; but everybody else in the band sang, too, especially the rhythm guitarist and the fiddler.

Roy Hall, 1955. (Courtesy of Country Music Foundation Library)

In the late forties Roy Hall and His Cohutta Mountain Boys headed north, through West Virginia, through Ohio, into Michigan. In 1949 Roy and the band cut their first records, for Fortune, a small, independent label located on 12th Street in Detroit. Over the next year Fortune released six sides by Roy Hall: "Dirty Boogie," "Okee Doaks," "Never Marry a Tennessee Girl," "We Never Get Too Big to Cry," "Five Years in Prison," and "My Freckle Face Gal." Most of these recordings were slick hillbilly blues, similar to the sort of music with which Hank Williams had recently risen to fame. But the most successful of the bunch, "Dirty Boogie"—the closest that Fortune came to a C&W hit—

was a wild, nasty rocker which foreshadowed much of what was to come to be musically in the South during the next few years.

In 1950 Roy traveled to Nashville, leaving the Cohutta Mountain Boys to fend for themselves in the wicked North. He cut two records there that year for Bullet, one of Nashville's most active independent labels. Both of these Bullet singles, "Mule Boogie" and "Ain't You Afraid," were fine hard-driving things, but they failed to sell. After Bullet, he recorded for Tennessee, a small local company that had a national hit in 1951 with Del Wood's piano instrumental "Down Yonder"; but Roy Hall's piano brought no hits.

He opened an after-hours joint on Commerce Street in downtown Nashville called the Music Box (later renamed the Musicians' Hideaway). There he played piano and drank, and, for a sweet change, made money doing so. In addition to liquor and music, Roy's club also featured blackjack and roulette, towards which diversions many of the Grand Ole Opry's most revered stars directed with moist and shaking hands their many-zeroed royalty checks.

One of Roy Hall's most loyal customers was Webb Pierce, who, following Hank Williams's death on New Year's Day 1953, became the undisputed king of the country singers. Pierce hired Roy as his piano-player, using him on most of his recordings in 1954–55. During this time, Roy also recorded with Marty Robbins and Hawkshaw Hawkins, a couple of successful cornballs whose music gave him even less room to move around in than Pierce's.

In the summer of 1954 Elvis Presley came to Roy Hall's club looking for work. "I was drunk that night, didn't feel like playin' piano, so I told 'im to git up there an' start doin' whatever in hell it was that he did," Roy recalled to me in the spring of 1981. "I fired 'im after just that one night. He weren't no damn good."

Towards the end of that same year another young man came to the club looking for work. He was Jerry Lee Lewis, and Roy kept him on for a few weeks, until Jerry Lee decided to return home to his wife and son in Louisiana.

"I hired 'im for $15 a night. He'd play that damned piano from

one in the mornin' till daylight. We did a lotta duets together. He was still a teenager, and ever'body figured that when we got busted he'd be the one that the cops would let go; so ever'body gave 'em their watches an' jewelry to hold for 'em, case the cops came. We got hit one night, he musta had fifteen wristwatches on his arms. Sure enough he was the only one didn't git searched."

It was also in 1954 that Roy Hall and a black musician named Dave Williams took a trip to the Everglades that resulted in one of the classic rock 'n' roll songs.

"We was down in Pahokee, on Lake Okeechobee. We was down there, out on a damn pond, fishin' an' milkin' snakes. Drinkin' wine, mostly. There was a bunch of us down there.

"See, this guy down there had a big bell that he'd ring to git us all to come in to dinner; an' I call over there to th'other part of th'island, I say, 'What's goin' on?' Colored guy said, 'We got twen'y-one drums'—see, we was all drunk—'we got an ol' bass horn an' they even keepin' time on a ding-dong.' See, that was the big bell they'd ring to git us t'come in."

Out of this legless colloquy came a song that began:

Twenty-one drums and an ol' bass horn,
Somebody beatin' on a ding-dong.
Come on over, baby, whole lotta shakin' goin' on;
Come on over, baby; baby, you can't go wrong.
There ain't no fakin', whole lotta shakin' goin' on.

Webb Pierce arranged for Hall to sign a contract with Decca, and on September 15, 1955, Hall went into the studio and cut three songs for the label, including "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On." The record was released three weeks later, coupled with a cover version of Fats Domino's "All by Myself." In its review of "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On," *Billboard* said, "Webb Pierce's pianist takes a stab in the vocal field and shows a highly distinctive, flavorsome voice." But the stab did not result in a hit.

Roy Hall continued to record for Decca until the summer of 1956. While a few of these recordings, such as his cover of Carl Perkins's "Blue Suede Shoes," were plainly uninspired, most of them were among the most fiery rockabilly records of the mid-fifties. His "Diggin' the Boogie" contained one of the toughest and most unrelenting rhythms that had ever been recorded in the South. But none of this amounted to a hit record.

Bad luck seemed to follow Roy Hall. "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On," which he had co-written under the pseudonym of Sunny David ("I was tryin' to git away from the income tax. They finally caught my ass, too"), became a huge hit for Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy's ex-employee, in 1957, and Roy stood to make a good deal of money in royalties. But when the time came to collect he was sued by his ex-wife, and the court awarded her his share of the royalties from the song. "And," Roy said, "Paul Cohen, who was the head of Decca, got me to sign a buncha papers when I was drunk, one o' them kinda deals, and I lost out that way. I worked for Webb Pierce for six years, an' he did the trick to me, too."

But Roy Hall kept on pumping his rockabilly music, and he kept playing around Nashville and wherever else he could find a piano and a paycheck.

"I quit drinkin' in 1972," he told me, "an' I play rock 'n' roll better'n I did twenty-five years ago. Ain't none of these young fellas got nothin' on me when it comes to rockin'out, nosir. You git me a date somewhere, transportation an' a few bucks, an' I'll put out some good ol' rockabilly, knock 'em dead."

A few years later, James Faye "Roy" Hall was no longer one to do the knocking. He went for the big drink on March 2, 1984, in Nashville. He was sixty-one years old.

For him, if for no other reason, Big Stone Gap shall stand tall forever in a purple girdle of pride.

Hardrock Gunter

The Mysterious Pig-Iron Man

Unlike the Bohemian culture of Paris in the twenties and thirties, that of Birmingham, Alabama, bespoke itself not through painting and literature, but through music. Its voice was not that of the sissy expatriates who had left their country to dwell with the ignoble Frog, but rather that of men—*men*—who stayed right where they belonged.

Most of these men earned their daily bread working in the mines from which were wrested iron ore, coal, and limestone, or in the mills where those wrested things were transformed into steel. The music of these men depended usually upon the color of their skin. Both country music and the blues had flourished in Birmingham since the late nineteenth century, but in the years after World War One, the true music of Birmingham was the boogie.

The first and most famous of the Alabama boogie men was Pinetop Smith, who had moved to Birmingham as a teenager. It was there that he learned to play piano, and it was there that he recorded "Pinetop's Boogie Woogie" for Brunswick in 1928. (Three months after he made the record, Pinetop was killed by a stray bullet while attending a party at the Odd Fellows Lounge in Chicago. By then the strange new phrase in the title of his record had begun to be heard wherever the hep argot was spoken.) Other pianists, such as Robert McCoy and Pinetop's friend Cow Cow Davenport, also contributed to the boogie fever that swept Birmingham in the twenties and thirties. From the forbidden North Side it spread like a wicked thing throughout that

city of steel and of the Holy Spirit; it spread until even the noble white man stomped in sublime fealty to it. And one of those noble white men was a young clay-eater named Sidney Louie Gunter.

He had been born on September 18, 1918, in a workman's barracks on the outskirts of town. After dropping out of high school in the early thirties, he took a job in the mines. In his off-hours he played guitar and sang in local beer-joints. The music that he made was hillbilly music, but it was hillbilly music with a boogie-woogie bent. No one in Birmingham had ever heard anything quite like it.

All those men and boys who, like Sid Gunter, worked with pickaxes were referred to as hardrock miners, or, simply, as hardrocks. In 1939, when Gunter quit the mines and took a job as a singing disc-jockey at Birmingham's oldest radio station, WAPI ("The Voice of Alabama"), he carried that epithet with him and came to be known then, if not quite forevermore, as Hardrock Gunter.

At WAPI Gunter worked as a solo performer and at times as a member of Happy Wilson's Golden River Boys. He eventually formed his own six-piece band, consisting of himself, a fiddler, a steel-guitarist, a bass-player, a drummer, and a boogie-woogie piano man. They were known throughout Birmingham, and as far as the mighty Voice of Alabama could be heard, as Hardrock Gunter and the Pebbles.

In 1949 Gunter wrote a song called "Birmingham Bounce." It was a cut-time boogie that made frequent use of the word "rock-in'," and it became a local sensation. Early in 1950 he and his band recorded the song for Bama Records, a small label which operated out of Room 905 in the Bankhead Hotel. The record was quickly covered by the Decca country singer Red Foley. Foley's record hit the country charts in early May, and by the end of the month it had risen to Number 1, beating out Hank Williams's latest record, "Long Gone Lonesome Blues." Gunter's song continued to be covered, by slick hillbillies such as Tex Williams and Pee Wee King, by black singers such as Amos Milburn and Lionel Hampton. By summer's end "Birmingham

Bounce" was one of the best-known songs in the country, and the sudden anthem of Southern hep.

Hardrock Gunter's second record for Bama, released in July 1950, was a song called "Gonna Dance All Night." This new record was even more emphatically frenzied than its predecessor. Again and again throughout the song Gunter half-drawled, half-growled, "We're gonna rock 'n' roll." The record did not sell, not in Birmingham or anywhere else. Nor did his third and last Bama release, a nasty jump song called "Lonesome Blues." (The flip side of "Lonesome Blues" was a wonderful indictment of hillbilly music, "Dad Gave My Hog Away.") By then Gunter was appearing regularly on Happy Wilson's new WAFM television show, "The Happiness Boys."

Towards the end of 1950, Hardrock Gunter and the Pebbles recorded for Bullet Records in Nashville. "My Bucket's Been Fixed," released in December 1950, was Gunter's answer to Hank Williams's 1949 hit, "My Bucket's Got a Hole in It."

Gunter was signed by Decca in early 1951. "Boogie Woogie on Saturday Night," recorded, like most of Decca's country records, at the Tulane Hotel in Nashville, was released in March. It was a fine rockabilly record, but it failed to sell, as did its successor, "I've Done Gone Hog Wild." His third release for Decca, cut in the summer of 1951, was stranger by far than anything preceding it: a country version of "Sixty-Minute Man," the Dominoes' recent R&B hit about Lovin' Dan, the hepster who could fuck for an hour without missing a stroke. As if this were not enough, Gunter recorded the song as a duet with smut-voiced Roberta Lee. (Now signed to Decca, Roberta Lee was a young lady from Dayton, Ohio, who was known in the late forties, when she had recorded for Tempo, as "The Girl with the Anfractuous Voice.")

Decca continued to release the recordings that Gunter made, but his days as a Decca act were numbered. In September 1951 the thirty-three-year-old singer, perhaps fearing a Chinese take-over of his beloved Alabama, joined the Army. He got no closer to Korea than Fort Jackson, South Carolina, where he became a first lieutenant in the 167th Infantry Regiment.

In 1953 Gunter headed north, where he began work at the

Hardrock Gunter, in matching tie and boxer shorts, looks to the West and digs it. (Courtesy of Country Music Foundation Library)

WWVA "Jamboree" in Wheeling, West Virginia. He recorded for MGM that spring. By the end of the summer he had gone back to Birmingham, where he began broadcasting a daily four-hour show at radio station WJLD. In April 1954, while in Birmingham, Gunter cut a new version of "Gonna Dance All Night" and leased it to Sun Records in Memphis. The Sun record was released in May, and it sold as poorly at the Bama recording of it had sold four years earlier. A few months later Sun released a more accessible rockabilly record by a young man named Elvis Presley.

Later in the year, he returned to WWVA in Wheeling. Throughout 1954–55 he made records for King, which was located not too far away, in Cincinnati. The best of his King releases was a double-sided rocker, "I'll Give 'Em Rhythm" and "I Put My Britches On Just Like Everybody Else"; but the record failed to receive airplay.

Gunter leased another recording to Sun in the spring of 1956: "Jukebox, Help Me Find My Baby," which he had cut in Wheeling. Even though it was a bad record, it failed to sell.

Hardrock Gunter began to fade. He was forty years old now, and rock 'n' roll, which he had helped to bring into being, had passed him by without so much as a cursory tip of the bebop hat. He continued to make records, bad records, for his own labels, such as Emperor ("Whoo! I Mean Whee!," 1957), Cross Country ("Let Me Be a Fool," 1958), and Cullman ("Is It Too Late," 1959); but nothing could stay the fading.

Early in 1962 he cut a record for Starday. It was an atrocity, a truly singular one, called "Hillbilly Twist." The Lord, who had taken a great liking to Hardrock's records of ten years past, mercifully delivered "Hillbilly Twist" to a fast darkness. Not long after this, Hardrock Gunter quit the WWVA "Jamboree" and announced that he was retiring to Golden, Colorado.

In the sixties he put out an album called *Songs They Censored in the Hills*. In 1972—by now he was called simply Rock Gunter—he made an album consisting of guitar renditions of a dozen Hank Williams songs. After that he ceased to be heard from.

Merrill Moore

The Saddle, Rock & Rhythm Man

Merrill E. Moore was born in Algona, on the eastern shore of the Des Moines River, in northern Iowa, on September 26, 1923. He began playing piano at about the age of seven, picking out the melodies of the hymns he heard at the Methodist church his parents dragged him to on Sundays. When he was eight he made his debut on WHO.

Then came Mrs. Gunn, a piano teacher, a fancy lady from the Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio. And what of her breasts? Did they linger, warm and rife, against the nape of young Merrill's neck, fill his tender being with the intoxicating liquor of their perfume, as she bent over his shoulder to guide his hands across the keys? Mr. Moore makes no mention of this. Yet, one wonders at the sins which might—might, I say—cause a woman to flee in shame from the Oberlin Conservatory, across the endless desolate miles of Indiana and Illinois, to seek unholy sanctuary in Algona, Iowa. But let us speak no more of this woman, who in fact may have done no wrong. She is departed now. Let her Maker alone be judge.

While in high school, Merrill discovered boogie-woogie through the records of Meade Lux Lewis, Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson, and Freddie Slack, who was then playing piano in Will Bradley's Orchestra. "Those were the cats that really laid it down for me," he told me.

After high school Merrill enlisted in the Navy to fight the war. He won. In 1945 he married, moved to Tucson, and took a job playing at the Santa Rita Hotel. Three years later he moved to

Merrill Moore, winsome in the West. (Courtesy of Merrill Moore)

San Diego. Playing a mixture of boogie-woogie and Western swing, Merrill found steady work in various local bands. But both types of music were dying fast. Soon they would be completely dead, even in San Diego.

In 1950 Merrill Moore formed a band of his own. It looked like a country band: piano, guitar, bass, steel, and fiddle. It didn't sound like one, however. And while Merrill continued to pump boogie-woogie bass lines with his left hand, his right hand was up to something altogether different. He didn't really have a name for the new type of music he was playing, but he had a name for his band: the Saddle, Rock & Rhythm Boys.

Early in 1952 Ken Nelson signed Merrill Moore and his Saddle, Rock & Rhythm Boys to Capitol. On May 12, 1952, in Los Angeles, Merrill cut his first record.

Capitol didn't release anything by him until the latter part of

1952, when his recording of "Corrine, Corrina" was issued. Although he didn't have a hit, Merrill continued to make records for Capitol, and Capitol continued to release them, until 1958.

Merrill made some hot ones. His "Fly Right Boogie" (1954) recounted, at a dangerously fast speed, his doctor's warnings about the wages of living on a sustained second wind. His original "Buttermilk Baby" (1957) was about the pleasures of fat broads. More often, Merrill looked elsewhere for his material. He reworked country songs such as "Bartender's Blues," "Barrel House Bessie," and "Snatchin' and Grabbin'." From Western swing he took Bob Wills's "She's Gone" and Hank Thompson's "Doggie House Boogie." He played with boogie-woogie classics such as the 1940 "Down the Road a Piece" and the 1946 "House of Blue Lights." Sometimes he reached even further back, to Jelly Roll Morton's "King Porter Stomp," to "Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue," or even to Felix Arndt's 1915 "Nola."

His best work, such as "House of Blue Lights" (1953), "Down the Road a Piece" (1955), and "Rock-Rockola" (1955; a tribute to the Rockola jukebox), represents some of the finest, most raucous rockabilly to be heard on record, a wedding of hillbilly boogie and R&B that would not be bettered until the coming of Jerry Lee Lewis.

Although Merrill, like everyone else, did not hear the word "rockabilly" until 1954 or so, there was pride in his broad Midwestern voice when he recalled, "We were doing that—rockabilly—before I ever heard of Bill Haley. I never knew those guys until later. But we were doin' that in 1948, yessir. 'House of Blue Lights,' 'Down the Road a Piece,' 'Red Light.' And I tell ya what, we'd take a buncha Hank Williams tunes and do the boogie-woogie to 'em. Yessir."

"House of Blue Lights," "Down the Road a Piece," and "Red Light" were Merrill's three best-selling records. But in all his years with Capitol he never had a national hit, and he never made the charts. Capitol simply didn't know how to sell him, or to whom.

"I always thought that they were kind of in the wrong category. I never was country. I was more boogie-woogie and rock-

abilly, that kind of stuff. So I think they categorized it a little bit wrong there."

After Capitol dropped him in 1958, Merrill Moore didn't record again until 1969, when he cut an album for release in Great Britain by BMC Records. (Like most obscure rockabilly heroes, Merrill is better known abroad than in his native land. In 1967 Ember Records in London issued an anthology of Capitol sides, *Bellyful of Blue Thunder*. A second collection, called *Rough-House 88*, followed in 1969.)

Merrill was still performing regularly in San Diego when I spoke with him, and was quick to say, "We play that stuff better today than we did back then. Yes sir."

As the philosophers tell us, it's a long way from Algona to San Diego. But now that Merrill Moore's made it, he's not looking back. Nosir.

Skeets McDonald

Whom in the End the Tattooed Lady Slew

Enos William McDonald was born on October 1, 1915, on a small farm near Greenway, Arkansas. He took to music and to female flesh at an early age. Humble tillers of the soil that they were, his parents, Sam and Ethel, could not afford to buy their son a maiden, but they did purchase for him a guitar. After finishing high school in 1932, young Skeets—such was the odd name by which our hero would thenceforth till the end of his days be known—bade farewell to his Arkansas home and traveled north, to Michigan, where cars and dreams are made.

With the help of several other displaced rednecks, which were plentiful in that land, Skeets formed his own hillbilly boogie band, the Lonesome Cowboys. By 1937 the Lonesome Cowboys had found steady work with WXEL in Royal Oak. From WXEL the band moved to WFDF in Flint, then to WCAR in Pontiac; but by then, 1943, the world was at war. In April of that year Skeets joined the Army and, loins girt, shipped out to help save hillbilly boogie from the iron talons of fascism. He returned to Michigan from the Pacific in 1946 and, wearing now a bronze battle star, took up where he had left off.

As the featured vocalist in a five-man group called Johnny White and His Rhythm Riders, Skeets recorded in the summer of 1950 for Fortune Records in Detroit. Skeets had written both sides of the record, and the songs were expressions of his curious devotion to the flesh of the lesser sex.

She had a face like a groundhog,
Long, shaggy hair like an ape;
But I loved that woman,
I loved her for her lovely shape.

Such was his "Mean and Evil Blues." Just as singular was his dusting-off of "The Tattooed Lady," which, in the splendor of its belabored metaphor, is, among all portraits of wondrous Gaea, surpassed only by that in Hesiod's *Theogeny*.

Once I married a tattooed lady;
It was a cold and winter day.
And tattooed all around her body
Was the map of the good old USA;
And every night before I'd go to sleep,
I'd jerk down the quilt and I'd take a peep:
Upon her butt was West Virginny;
Through them hills I just love to roam.
But when the moon begins to shine down her
Wabash,
That's when I remember my Indiana home.

Skeets McDonald moved west to Los Angeles in February 1951. He called at the office of Cliffie Stone, an ersatz hillbilly who ran the "Hometown Jamboree" show at KXLA in Pasadena. Stone signed him to perform on the show, then recommended him to Ken Nelson of Capitol Records. Within two weeks Skeets was signed to the label.

His first record for Capitol, "Scoot, Git and Begone," was released in May of 1951. It did not sell well, nor did its successors: "Today I'm Movin' Out," "Ridin' with the Blues," "Fuss and Fight." The trouble was, these records were not quite like the records being made by the other hillbillies who recorded for Capitol, and the company did not really know what to do with them.

In early 1952 Skeets took a break from recording to appear as Johnny Mack Brown's singing sidekick in the Monogram movie *Smokeless Powder*. Returning to the studio, he cut a song called

Skeets McDonald, in the boots that only he could fill.
(Courtesy of Country Music Foundation Library)

"Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes," written and first cut by Slim Willet. The record hit the country charts in October, and it eventually rose to Number 2. Since it was a straight, mawkish record that Skeets had now hit with, Capitol was very reluctant to allow him to return to that stranger, louder, and more rhythmic music that he had been recording.

Skeets went through the motions, but there were no more hits, and the singer seemed to come alive only occasionally, as in 1954, when he was permitted to record "Your Love Is Like a Faucet." But by 1956 the Capitol people, like those throughout

the industry, were becoming aware of Elvis Presley and Carl Perkins and something called rock 'n' roll. As they became aware of these things, they began to recall those strange records Skeets McDonald had been making for them back in 1951, and they untethered him. The result was that in 1956 Skeets made some of the best rockabilly records to be heard: "I Got a New Field to Plow" (eat your heart out, Hesiod), "You Oughta See Grandma Rock," and especially "Heart-Breakin' Mama."

But there was a problem. Skeets was now forty years old, overweight, and balding. Capitol signed Gene Vincent, and Skeets McDonald hit the streets.

Late in 1959, after appearing as a regular on "Town Hall Party," broadcast from Compton, California, by KTTV, Skeets got a contract with Columbia Records in Nashville. What ensued was a series of pleasant but unexceptional country records, a notch or two above the usual middle-of-the-road Nashville stuff. A few of these Columbia records were successful in a small way: "This Old Heart" (1960), "Call Me Mr. Brown" (1963), "Big Chief Buffalo Nickel" (1965), and "Mabel" (1967) were minor country hits. Another few of them were actually quite good: "You're Not Wicked, You're Just Weak" (1961), "Chin Up, Chest Out" and "Fast Company" (from the 1964 album *Call Me Skeets!*). But 1956, let alone 1951, was a long time gone.

Columbia dropped Skeets in 1967. He made one more record. "It's Genuine," which was released by Uni in early 1968. It was over, all of it, over the lea. The tattooed lady beckoned, but she did not smile.

His heart ceased, and he died, on March 31, 1968. Please, wherever you are, bow your heads for ten minutes of silent prayer.

The Clovers

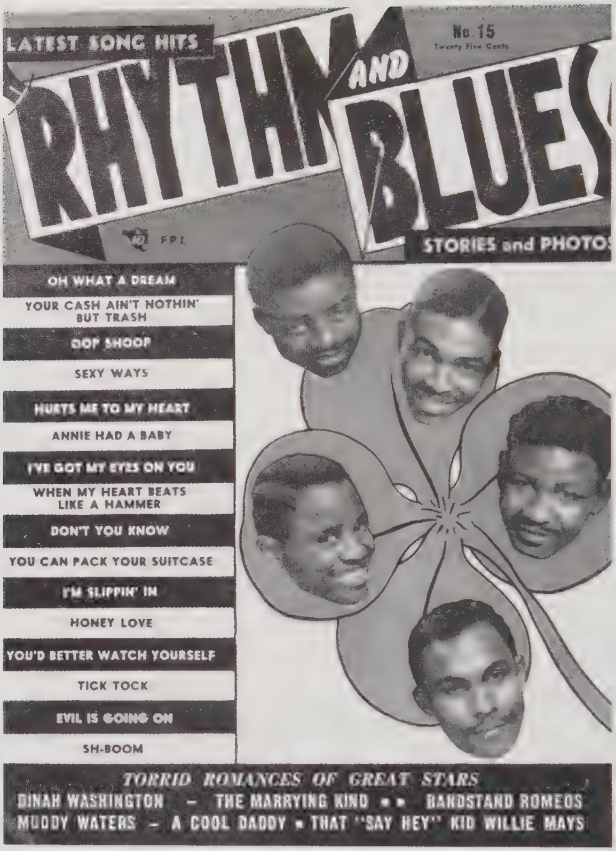
Absalom, Absalom!

Doo-Wah, Doo-Wah!

Descended musically from the Mills Brothers and the Ink Spots, both of which groups had been making records since the early 1930s, and from the urban gospel groups such as the Swan Silverstone Singers ("Jesus Hits Like the Atom Bomb") that flourished during the war years, the young black vocal groups that ascended in Eastern cities—New York, Detroit, Washington, D.C.—in the late 1940s were a parallel development to the jump-blues bands that thrived on the West Coast. Together they were the main black vectors of rock 'n' roll.

First came the Ravens, the quartet organized by bass singer Jimmy Ricks in the spring of 1946. They made their debut at the Club Baron in Harlem, and their first records, for Hub, that same spring. Next came the Orioles quintet, who cut their first record in the summer of 1948, for It's a Natural (which, after this first Orioles release, became Jubilee Records). These earliest of the R&B vocal groups were rather conservative in both their style of singing and their choice of material. (That first Ravens record, for example, was a version of the popular ersatz Yiddish ditty "Mahzel." This was followed by a coupling of "Ol' Man River" and "Would You Believe Me," a piece of corn from the insipid 1947 Warner Brothers picture *Love and Learn.*)

Then came the Clovers. Lead singer Harold Lucas, bass singer Billy Shelton, and tenor Thomas Woods began performing as a trio in 1947, while they were still attending Armstrong High School in Washington, D.C. Lucas chose the name of the Clovers because he thought it would lend good luck to their musical



(Courtesy of KICKS)

undertaking. (*The Lucky Star Dream Book* concurs: "CLOVER—Denotes riches in abundance. This is an excellent dream for all. 929.") In time, John "Buddy" Bailey joined the group as the lead, with Lucas switching to baritone. Second tenor Matthew McQuater replaced Thomas Woods, and bass Harold Winley replaced Billy Shelton, in 1948. In 1949 the group took on guitarist Bill Harris. They were ready to box their dream.

In the beginning, the Clovers were not much more daring than the Ravens or the Orioles, whose material, along with that of the older Charioteers, formed a large part of the Clovers' early repertoire. By the end of the decade, however, the Clovers

had begun to rasp the glossy polish from their music's edge, and to perform in a less refined, more vulgar manner. They became the first of the traditionally borne vocal groups to make the leap across the Jordan to the chicken shack that transcends all knowing.

Working at the Rose Club in Washington, D.C., in 1950, they made the acquaintance of Lou Krefetz, who was to become their manager through all the golden years. (To quote again from *The Lucky Star Dream Book*: "JEW—To dream that you speak to a jew denotes business success. It also indicates profitable employment. 990.") Krefetz brought the Clovers to New York, where late in 1950 they made their first record, for Eddie Heller's little Rainbow label. It was a rather timid debut, an innocuous version of the 1925 hit "Yes Sir, That's My Baby," in which the Clovers reverted to their tamer, earlier style. But what soon followed was anything but timid.

During Christmastide, Krefetz negotiated a deal with Herb Abramson and Ahmet Ertegun, the bosses of the three-year-old Atlantic label. On February 22, 1951, the Clovers went into the Apex studio in midtown Manhattan. They came out with one of the biggest R&B hits of 1951, "Don't You Know I Love You."

As their first Atlantic release was reaching Number 1 on the R&B charts in the summer of 1951, the Clovers cut "Fool, Fool, Fool." This, their second Atlantic release, hit Number 1 in the fall, emerging after "Don't You Know I Love You" as one of the best-selling R&B records of the year. (The only vocal group to surpass them in 1951 were the Dominoes, whose "Sixty-Minute Man" had somehow crossed over from the R&B to the pop charts.)

Their third release, Rudy Toombs's wonderful low-rent morality tale "One Mint Julep," recorded on December 17, hit the R&B charts in April. Their biggest hit of 1952 came in the summer, "Ting-A-Ling." After that came the two-sided hit, "Hey, Miss Fannie" (written by Ahmet Ertegun under his backwards-spelt nom de plume "Nugetre") and "I Played the Fool." After their next hit, "Crawlin'," was recorded on August 7, lead singer Buddy Bailey was drafted, and John Philip, who had

previously performed as a solo, took Bailey's place through early 1953, during which time the Clovers did not record. By March, when they cut "Good Lovin'," a new lead singer had been found, Charlie White of the original Dominoes. White remained with the group for a year—it was him on "Lovey Dovey", made in September 1953—then was replaced in early 1954 by Billy Mitchell, who had sung on a few of Joe Morris's Atlantic releases (including the unforgettable "Bald Head Woman" of 1951). It was Billy Mitchell whose deep, wildly slurring cottonmouthed voice brought off the song, cut on April 16, 1954, that stands as

THE CLOVERS

(Courtesy of KICKS)

the Clovers' masterpiece, "Your Cash Ain't Nothin' but Trash," written by the great Jesse Stone (doing business as Charles Calhoun). Though one of the immortal rock-'n'-roll records, it reached only as far as Number 9 on the R&B charts. (That summer of 1954 was dominated by Atlantic's new group, the Drifters.) The Clovers did, however, get to perform the song in living, lurid color in the 1955 Studio Films featurette *Rock 'n' Roll Revue*, which behooves beholding.

When Buddy Bailey returned to civilian life and to the Clovers, Billy Mitchell stayed on, and the two singers alternated in the lead. But after 1955 there was not all that much to alternate on. "Devil or Angel," which hit the charts in January 1956, was the group's last Top Ten R&B success. "Love, Love, Love," which followed it, was the first Clovers record to cross over to the pop charts—it reached Number 30 in the summer of 1956—but it did so only by diluting and sweetening the group's true sound. There were half a dozen more Clovers records released by Atlantic through the spring of 1958. One of these, "Down in the Alley" (1957), was quite good; but none of them, good or bad, met with any success. Things had changed. Newer, younger groups—the Drifters, the Coasters, both of whom managed Number 1 pop as well as Number 1 R&B hits—had come along and taken up where the Clovers had left off. The big crossover Coasters hits—"Searchin'," "Yakety Yak," "Charlie Brown," and the rest—were really nothing more than cleaned-up, deconked reflections of the earlier Clovers sound. But, as it is writ: everything changes, nothing abides.

After Atlantic, the Clovers cut two unremarkable singles and an album, *The Clovers in Clover*, for Lou Krefetz's Poplar Records in 1958. Later that year they signed with United Artists. Six singles by the group were released by that company from 1959 to 1961. One of them, "Love Potion No. 9," issued in the late summer of 1959, was the Clovers' last hit record, reaching Number 23 on both the pop and the R&B charts. In October 1961 the group returned to make one more record for Atlantic, "The Bootie Green," a godawful attempt to horn in on the Twist craze.

The Clovers broke apart at the end of 1961. Harold Lucas and

Buddy Bailey put together another group called the Clovers, and they made a record for the Port label. After that, Lucas and Bailey went separate ways, each of them forming his own Clovers. Bailey's group made a few records for the Winley (owned by bass singer Harold Winley's brother Paul) and Porwin labels; Lucas's put out a record on Brunswick and one on Tiger.

In December 1964, thirteen Christmases since Lou Krefetz (who had split in 1958) had brought them to New York, Harold Lucas, Buddy Bailey, and Harold Winley held a Clovers reunion at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem. Then everybody looked round and faced facts.

"Where there were hills long ago," states the venerable Professor Konje in the Introduction to *The Lucky Star Dream Book*, "there are now streams. So the meaning of dreams changes likewise." Think about it.

The Dominoes

The Glory of Bubbonia

The Dominoes were, I think, the most brilliant, and the classiest, of the rock-'n'-roll vocal groups. The Clovers and the Midnighters ruled the alley, but the Dominoes ordered from the top shelf and kept their pinkies pointed towards the morning star. Their music possessed power of a different sort. Their mastery of rhythm and meter, their subtle interweaving of the coarse and the sublime, their lyrics which seemed never to rhyme for the sake of rhyme alone—these are qualities so rare and so close to poetry's edge that one is almost tempted to bring that inescapable little gray mouse of a word, "art," into play. But don't worry; I wouldn't spring that one on you at this advanced point.

The founder and leader of the Dominoes was a man named Billy Ward. Born in Los Angeles on September 19, 1921, Ward was a classically trained child soprano who sang in concert at the age of six. In his years before high school, he studied piano, organ, and harmony. He began composing when he was fourteen. He was a Golden Gloves champion, and in the years after that he was a soldier, a journalist, and a voice coach at Carnegie Hall. It was in New York, 1950, that he formed the Dominoes.

Ward recruited Clyde McPhatter, another former boy soprano who had become a high-placed tenor. McPhatter had been a choirboy at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Durham, North Carolina. Moving to New York with his family when he was twelve, Clyde had adhered to the belief that his voice was something with which to serve the Lord. Persuading him to join in

BILLY WARD

(Courtesy of KICKS)

Billy Ward's worldly enterprise was not an easy task, but Ward succeeded. The others whom Ward brought in were James Van Loan, second tenor, Joe Lamont, baritone, and Billy Brown, bass.

In November 1950 the Dominoes signed with King. They were to be the first act on King's new Federal label. In December the group appeared on *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts*, the popular Monday-night CBS television show. At the end of the month their first record, "Do Something for Me," was released by Federal. It hit the R&B charts a month later, and it eventually rose to Number 6.

Variety has always been the most informed and most astute of the publications that cover popular culture. The weekly's comments concerning the Dominoes cut right to the heart of the group's singularity. Reviewing their recent show at the Apollo Theatre, *Variety* remarked in its issue of February, 4, 1951, that the Dominoes' "unusual style" was in essence "an application of spiritual characteristics to pop song delivery." And by the word "spiritual" was meant all-out, sanctified, Holy Ghost fervency.

Nowhere was that fervency better illustrated than in the Dominoes' great hit, "Have Mercy Baby," recorded in Cincinnati, January 28, 1952. From its first hard saxophone blast to its howling-and-hand-jive interlude to the brutally sarcastic rhythmic sobbing of its fade-out, "Have Mercy Baby" was the Dominoes' masterpiece, a perfect rock-'n'-roll record, and one of the very few that really deserves to be played loud.

I've been a good-for-nothin',
I've lied and cheated, too;
But I've reaped it all, my darlin',
And I don't know what to do.

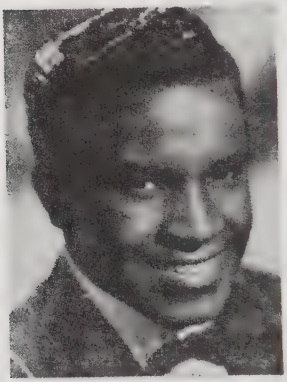
Less remarkable a piece of work, but more important as history, was their 1951 hit about Lovin' Dan's powers of sexual endurance. Like most of the Dominoes' songs, it was written by Billy Ward and his manager, Rose Marks.

Lookee here, girls, I'm tellin' you now,
They call me Lovin' Dan;
I rock 'em, roll 'em all night long;
I'm a sixty-minute man.

Delivered in a manner of perfect on-the-nod composure, "Sixty-Minute Man," recorded in New York on December 30, 1950, was the rage of 1951, the biggest R&B hit of the year. But what made "Sixty-Minute Man" important in terms of the history of rock 'n' roll was the fact that in August 1951, a little less than three months after it had hit the R&B charts, it crossed over to the mainstream pop charts. "Sixty-Minute Man" thus became the first record by a black rock-'n'-roll group to become a pop

DOMINO DOINGS

Here are some of the facts on what the Dominoes have accomplished during the short space of time they've been on the R & B scene. That's right; these are the facts, man!



BILLY WARD

So well liked were Billy Ward and his Dominoes when they recently played Las Vegas' plush Sahara Hotel, that Bill Miller, boss of the spot, rented an air-conditioned trailer so that the boys could relax in comfort between their show-stopping efforts. And when Billy rented a house in Vegas, the Sahara provided all the furnishings.

Billy Ward and his world-famous Dominoes will play a series of benefits for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in the very near future. The NAACP executive secretary, Walter White, called upon the Dominoes, recognized throughout show-business as one of the great money-making acts, to aid the association in its fund-raising campaign. Ward leaped at the opportunity to serve, lauding "the great work that the NAACP is doing for mankind."

So impressed were the owners of Pep's Lounge in Philadelphia with the "Billy Ward Teen-Age Jamboree", staged there recently, that they are planning to stage a special matinee weekly for the bobby-soxers. Billy insisted on the matinee, which some 600 kids jammed, and provided free soft drinks, food and a complete show.

All members of Billy Ward's Dominoes have made down payments on homes through a special fund established for the purpose by their well loved manager, Mrs. Rose Marks. Tenors Jimmy Van Loan and Jackie Wilson will settle in Philadelphia and Detroit, respectively; baritone Milton Merle and bass Cliff Givens in Newark, N. J.; and Billy in Los Angeles.

Yes, Pres, these are just a few of the remarkable things that the Dominoes have done, and there are many, many more to come. Keep your eyes glued on these Hep Kats, for they have all the class in the world!

(Courtesy of KICKS)

hit. It was surprising in light of the song's subject matter. At the time, Rosemary Clooney's "Come On-a My House" was at the top of the pop charts. It is curious to think of Lovin' Dan taking her up on her offer.

That "Sixty-Minute Man" reached only as high as Number 23 on the pop charts mattered little. What really mattered was that it had reached the pop charts at all. It set the precedent for things to come. During the next few years, other black rock-'n'-roll groups crossed over to the pop charts—in 1953, the Orioles with "Crying in the Chapel"; in 1954, the Crows with "Gee," the Chords with "Sh-Boom," the Charms with "Hearts of Stone," and the Five Keys with "Ling, Ting, Tong"—but none of these ensuing crossover hits was as exciting or as good as "Sixty-Minute Man."

The group underwent drastic changes in 1952. James Van Loan, the second tenor, was replaced by Charlie White, formerly of the Checkers, a no-hit King group. Billy Brown, the bass man (who joined the Checkers), was replaced by David McNeil. But the change that irrevocably altered the group was the departure of Clyde McPhatter, who began recording for Atlantic with his own Drifters in June 1953. (The immense success of the Drifters' first record, "Money Honey," released in August, proved that McPhatter had made no mistake.) Billy Ward replaced McPhatter with another singer who would find fame on his own in a few years' time, Jackie Wilson.

The new group, billed now as Billy Ward and His Dominoes, continued to have hits throughout 1953. But they were decidedly minor hits, and they were not achieved with songs written by Ward, but rather with a rendition of the standard "These Foolish Things Remind Me of You" and a cover version of Tony Bennett's hit "Rags to Riches." An attempt to capitalize on that year's 3-D movie craze with a single called "My Baby's 3-D" failed.

Ward and the Dominoes left Federal and signed with Jubilee Records in September 1954. In the spring of 1956 they moved to Decca. Their first Decca single, released that May, was "St. Therese of the Roses." This was indeed a far cry from "Sixty-Minute Man" and "Have Mercy Baby," but it succeeded in

bringing the group to the pop charts. (St. Therese, however, did not make it as far up those charts as Lovin' Dan had made it.) In the following spring they signed with Liberty. Their first release on that label, a version of "Star Dust," was a minor hit in both the R&B and pop markets. Two more small pop hits followed on Liberty, "Deep Purple" in the fall of 1957 (by then Jackie Wilson had left and signed with Brunswick) and "Jennie Lee" in the spring of 1958. In the summer of 1960 they made a handful of recordings for ABC-Paramount, among them the most torpid rendition of "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise" that had been heard since 1919. It had been a long, a very long ten years since 1950.

Lovin' Dan, of course, had seen it all coming. In 1954, at one of their last worthy sessions, the Dominoes had recorded a song called "Can't Do Sixty No More." As Frank Costello once observed, there's only so many bullets in that gun. Have mercy, baby, and pass the *TV Guide*.

Jackie Brenston

To the Package Store in Style

The exemplary Christian capitalist Sam C. Phillips, founding father of those great Memphis institutions of the 1950s, Sun Records and Holiday Inns, is said to have expressed the view that a certain 1951 recording (which, as coincidence has it, was produced by him) was the first true rock-'n'-roll record ever made; and this notion from on high has been echoed by others. While it certainly is not the case—there being no first rock-'n'-roll record any more than there is any first modern novel—the fact remains that the record in question was possessed of a sound and a fury the sheer, utter newness of which set it apart from what had come before. In a way, it can be seen as a turning point, an embarking from the rock-'n'-roll of the 1940s towards a brave new world of pegged pants, filtered cigarettes, and Medalo Bops: "Rocket '88'" by Jackie Brenston and His Delta Cats.

Jackie Brenston was born on August 15, 1930, in Clarksdale, Mississippi, the delta town where Highway 49 meets Highway 61. Since early in the century Clarksdale had been one of the most musically fertile places in the South. It was where Son House, Charley Patton, and Robert Johnson worked their wicked magic in juke joints at the outskirts of town. (And where, according to House, Johnson literally sold his soul to the Devil one night, standing at the crossroad.) It was where Muddy Waters, who had grown up listening to and learning from those men, made some of his first recordings. It was where John Lee Hooker and Eddie Boyd were born.

Falsifying the date of his birth, Brenston enlisted in the Army in 1944. Returning to civilian life, and to Clarksdale (indeed, who, though he may travel the wide world over, can resist the allure of Fourth Street?), in 1947, he fell in with a local character named Jesse Flowers, who drank and played the saxophone. It was Flowers who aided Brenston in his quest to discover that instrument's most degraded possibilities. By the close of the decade Brenston, the proud owner of the shiniest secondhand saxophone in all of Coahoma County, had succeeded.

Entering at this point into the scheme of things was Isaiah Turner, an eighteen-year-old disc-jockey who had the shiniest suits in Clarksdale. He also had a band, in which he played piano and sometimes sang. He had seen Muddy Waters get out of Coahoma County and go on to make records—one of which, "Louisiana Blues," was now becoming a hit—for Chess. He saw no reason why he, a far sharper dresser than that former cotton-picker, should not do the same. As 1950 became 1951, Ike Turner was ready to start making records. There was only one problem. His lead singer, Johnny O'Neal, had recently been signed by King Records, and he had run off, leaving the rest of the band to stand around picking lint from their suits on the corner of Fourth Street. Ike looked, and he found Jackie Brenston. He told him to buy a shiny suit and write some songs; they were going to be stars.

They traveled north on Highway 61 to Memphis in the last, chilly days of February 1951. There were five of them: Ike Turner, guitarist Willie Kizart, tenor saxophone-player Raymond Hill, drummer Willie Sims, and the new guy, Jackie Brenston.

Twenty-eight-year-old Sam Phillips had not yet begun his Sun Records Company; another year would pass before the first Sun record would be made. But he had been operating a recording studio, making and leasing recordings, for almost a year. It was to that studio, at 706 Union Avenue, that Ike Turner and his band went; and it was there, on March 3, that "Rocket '88'" was made.

It was Jackie Brenston's song, but he had derived it from a

Jackie Brenston, near where the road ended.
(Courtesy of Delta Blues Museum, Clarkplace, Miss.)

song in the band's repertoire—"Cadillac Boogie," which Jimmy Liggins had cut for Specialty in 1947. Instead of the Cadillac, Brenston used the new Oldsmobile Rocket Hydra-Matic "88" as his symbol of the do-rag godhead. Far from hiding this unoriginality, Brenston openly admitted it. Many years later, he told Jim O'Neil of *Living Blues* magazine that "if you listen to the two [songs], you'll find out they're both basically the same. The words are just changed."

While the song itself may or may not have been original, its performance surely was. The overcharged amplification of Willie Kizart's electric guitar, the careening glissandi and manic triplets issuing from Ike Turner's piano (it is not improbable that six years later, when he came upon Jerry Lee Lewis, Sam Phillips, whose Christian-capitalist eyes had seen in Elvis a white boy who sang like a black, saw in Jerry Lee a white boy who played piano

like the odd, intense colored fellow, Ike Turner, whom he had witnessed this cold March day), Raymond Hill's post-melodic saxophone shriekings, Willie Sims's trash-can drumming, and the raw, heartfelt degeneracy of Jackie Brenston's singing, shouting, and yelping—the whole of these parts was a sound so loudly and luridly shocking, so preposterous in its celebration of booze, broads, and repossessed cars, that it was difficult to perceive where its brilliance ended and its lunacy began.

The band made four more recordings that day, with Ike Turner singing on two of them while Brenston stood back on second tenor sax. Sam Phillips wasted no time. He sold the recordings to Chess Records in Chicago, and Chess released two singles by the group in mid-April. The coupled sides that featured Turner's voice bore on their labels the credit Ike Turner and His Kings of Rhythm. This was how it should have been, and Ike was pleased. The other single, however, was credited to Jackie Brenston and his Delta Cats. This, in the eyes of Ike Turner, known no more then than now for his magnanimity and humility, was not how it should have been, and he was displeased. His displeasure grew more pronounced as it became apparent that the single that bore Brenston's name, rather than the one that bore his own, was going to be a hit.

"Rocket '88'" entered the R&B charts at the end of April. It rose to Number 1, and in the end emerged as one of the best-selling R&B records of 1951. The success of "Rocket '88'" had far-reaching effects. It heralded a new and wilder wave of rock 'n' roll. It stirred Sam Phillips's determination to found Sun, as he realized that the large profits from the recording he had produced could have been his rather than the Chess brothers'. And it caused Ike Turner and Jackie Brenston to part company after one more session (at which only one recording was made, "My Real Gone Rocket," the follow-up to "Rocket '88'"), in the summer of 1951. As time went on, Turner stepped forward from piano to guitar, allowing there to be no mistaking who the leader of his band was.

"My Real Gone Rocket" was released by Chess at the end of June. For whatever reasons—perhaps it was *too* much like its

antecedent—it failed to sell. Brenston's next single, "Independent Woman," the remaining recording from the first session, was put out in July. (The flip side of this record, "Juiced," was also credited to Jackie Brenston and His Delta Cats; but there are reasons to believe that it was actually by Billie Love, another R&B singer whose work Phillips leased to Chess.) Though it was quite different from the failed follow-up to "Rocket '88'," the slower, more lyrically subtle "Independent Woman" faded into oblivion with like celerity.

"Hi Ho Baby," Brenston's duet with Edna McCraney, was released by Chess in January 1952. "Starvation," a last Chess single, came in 1953. Then, little more than a year after it had begun, it was over. "I was a greenhorn," Brenston later reflected, "I had a hit record and no sense."

He took a job playing saxophone with Lowell Fulson's band in 1953, and he stayed with Fulson, on and off, through 1955. Then, humbled and weary, he was taken back into the fold by Ike Turner, who still had not managed to come up with a hit record. He remained with Turner until the early 1960s. Though he recorded with Turner's Kings of Rhythm throughout those years, Brenston's voice, which had once shaken the cool world, was heard on only two of the many singles that the band had out during that time. He was reduced to being Ike Turner's baritone sax-player. Turner allowed Brenston to sing a few songs when the band performed in public, but he forbade him to sing "Rocket '88'."

One of Brenston's most spirited couplets in "Rocket '88'" had been near the song's closing: "Goin' round the corner and get a fifth," he had sung; "Everybody in my car's gonna take a little nip." He no longer had the car, so to speak, but he was still going round the corner for fifths. Singer Jimmy Thomas, who joined Turner's band in 1958, said in a 1980 interview for *Blues Unlimited* of London that he remembered Brenston and tenor sax-player Raymond Hill being more or less drunk throughout the late fifties, even though Turner fined them for drinking. "They was drinking that really bad shit, boy," Thomas recalled. "That stuff they used to drink you probably wouldn't allow it in your

house. Not even to wash the floor. I'm telling you, man, it's really amazing . . . them cats, they could put away some alcohol, man."

In the summer of 1960 Ike Turner, with the help of Tina Turner, finally got his hit record, "A Fool in Love," the first of several for the Sue label. In New York that same summer Brenston cut a single of his own for Sue, "Trouble Up the Road" and "You Ain't the One," which was released during the Christmas season.

Brenston and Turner parted again, for the last time, in 1962, when Turner finished with Sue Records. Brenston got a job working in a band with a guy named Sid Wallace. "The only thing he was basically concerned about then," Wallace recalled of Brenston, "was a bottle of wine. And he'd play all night if he got that wine, and didn't worry about whether we made anything. But he pulled himself back up."

Before pulling himself back up, Jackie Brenston made one more record, "Want You to Rock Me" and "Down in My Heart." He cut it in Chicago with Earl Hooker's band, and it was put out on Mel London's Mel-Lon label in 1963. That was it. He returned to Clarksdale, to fabled Fourth Street. He wrung out his brain and sized up what was left. Years passed. The saxophone was no longer shiny. People in the street looked at him sideways, for he dressed in a manner that might best be described as futuristic and his behavior was erratic at times. They did not know, these people, what can happen to a man when his dreams of riding in style are repossessed; they did not know. He took a drink, he took another. The warm days ended, the cold days came. He awoke in a room at the Kennedy V.A. Hospital in Memphis. The Army, at least, had been good for something. He died there, on December 15, 1979. Just a ride there and a walk back. That fame shit sure drove a hard bargain.

The Midnighters

From the Sins of Annie to the Twist

It was towards the end of 1951 that Johnny Otis (born John Veliotes, he found it gainful to pass as black), the thirty-year-old Savoy recording star who also worked as a talent scout for King Records of Cincinnati, came upon a group called the Royals at a talent show at the Paradise Theatre in Detroit. Through Otis, the four-man group—lead singer Henry Booth, bass Sonny Woods, baritone Lawson Smith, and second lead Charles Sutton—were signed by King boss Syd Nathan, and in January 1952 the Royals began recording for King's sister R&B label, Federal.

The Royals' first record, "Every Beat of My Heart," written by Johnny Otis, was released in March 1952. This single did not do too well (although the song eventually became a hit by Gladys Knight and the Pips in 1961), nor did the four that followed; and in the early summer of 1953, Lawson Smith left the group, and Henry Booth moved aside to sing second lead with Sutton, making room for another Detroit son, Henry Bernard Ballard, to take over as lead singer.

Born on November 18, 1936, Hank Ballard had known the Royals since their gospel-singing days, and he had assisted the group in writing their 1952 "Fifth Street Blues." His style was much less tamed, his voice rougher than Sutton's. "Get It," the first record that Ballard cut with the Royals, entered the R&B charts in July 1953, and rose to become a Number 8 hit. "Get It" was rather lewd and suggestive, as was much R&B in the mid-fifties; but it was nothing compared to what was soon to follow.

Five gynecologists awaiting a girl named Annie.
(Courtesy of KICKS)

During the holiday season of 1953-54 Ballard wrote a song called "Sock It to Me, Mary." In the studio on January 14, 1954, producer Ralph Bass told Ballard that the title was "too strong," and that it should be changed. King engineer Eddie Smith's pregnant wife, Annie, came into the control room while Ballard was trying to amend his song, and, within a matter of minutes, "Sock It to Me, Mary" became "Work with Me, Annie."

Annie, please don't cheat,
Gimme all my meat,
Oo-oo-wee, so good to me;
Work with me, Annie,
Let's get it while the gettin' is good.

Federal released "Work with Me, Annie" in February 1954. Though it was denounced as "smut" by *Variety, Downbeat*, and other arbiters of hep morality, the record sold well in local

markets, especially Cincinnati, Detroit, and Philadelphia. In the second week of April it hit the national R&B charts. At that point, the Royals changed their name to the Midnighters—to avoid confusion with the "5" Royales, the successful Apollo group that had been signed by King.

"Work with Me, Annie" was the Number 1 R&B hit when, in the last week of May, Federal released the Midnighters' "Sexy Ways." Opening with the rude-blaring electric-guitar chords by Arthur Porter that would become the most commonly copied riff in rock 'n' roll, "Sexy Ways" elucidated the art of love according to Hank Ballard.

Wiggle, wiggle, wiggle, wiggle,
I just love your sexy ways;
Upside down, all around,
Any old way, just pound, pound,
pound.

"Sexy Ways" appeared on the R&B charts at the end of June. Both it and "Work with Me, Annie" remained on the charts through the middle of August, when Federal released "Annie Had a Baby" (written not by Ballard, but by Federal's owner, Syd Nathan, under his pseudonym Lois Mann, and by producer Henry Glover.) As August gave way to September, the Midnighters had three of the Top Ten R&B hits, with "Annie Had a Baby" in the Number 1 position.

There was a wave of "Annie" records throughout the rest of the year and well into the following year, beginning with Etta James's "The Wallflower (Dance with Me, Henry)" on Modern, and including the Midnighters' "Annie Pulled a Humbug" (Music City), the El-Dorados' "Annie's Answer" (Vee-Jay), Linda Hayes & the Platters' "My Name Ain't Annie" (King), Danny Taylor's "I'm the Father of Annie's Baby" (Bruce), and the Nu-Tones' "Annie Kicked the Bucket" (Hollywood Star). As for the Midnighters, they did not bother with the shameful girl after the fall of 1954, when they recorded "Annie's Aunt Fanny."

The Midnighters released nineteen more singles on Federal, through the end of 1958, but their last hit on the label was "It's

Love, Baby" in the summer of 1955. A *Greatest Hits* album, including all their past and lascivious glories, was released by King in December 1957. In 1959, billed now as Hank Ballard & the Midnighters, the group's records began to bear the King imprint.

Their first King single, recorded on November 11, 1958, was "Teardrops on Your Letter," a mundane weeper written by producer Henry Glover. The record hit the R&B charts in the second week of March 1959, but not too much attention was paid to the flip side, a fast dance song that Ballard had copyrighted in January under the title of "The Twist." One of those who did pay attention to it was Ernest Evans of Philadelphia,

(Courtesy of KICKS)

whose recording of it, under the name of Chubby Checker, was released by Cameo in the spring of 1960. King reissued the original "Twist" in July, as the craze was beginning to bloom, but the record rose no further than Number 28 on the pop charts.

Hank Ballard & the Midnighters continued to make records, and a few of these were hits: "Finger Poppin' Time" (1960), "Let's Go, Let's Go, Let's Go" (1960), "The Hoochi Coochi Coo" (1961), "The Continental Walk" (1961), "Nothin' but Good" (1961), and, finally and dismally, "Do You Know How to Twist" (1962). The group stopped recording in 1963. The next time that Hank Ballard was heard from was in the fall of 1968, when he asked Aretha Franklin, "How You Gonna Get Respect?", a King single that briefly appeared on the R&B charts in November of that year. "Butter Your Popcorn" followed in 1969. "From the Love Side" got some play in the East in the summer of 1972. In 1974 he recorded "Let's Go Streaking"—in the nude, he claimed.

Of scarlet-lettered Annie, and of her child, who shall not, even unto his tenth generation, enter the kingdom of God, alas, we have since heard even less.

Jimmie Logsdon

The Man Without a Subtitle

This is not a funny story, so try not to laugh. We begin in the small community of Panther, Kentucky, not far from the mighty Ohio River, which separates Kentucky from Indiana. The date is April 1, 1922, and Jimmie Logsdon is born. It is a common, unremarkable birth, unattended by wise men, indeed, unattended by all save the child's humble parents and himself. But a birth, nonetheless, it is. The father, a Methodist minister, offers his thanks to God.

Time passes slowly, as in a dream, and as it does we shift tenses, tiring of the historical-present. Time passed slowly, we tell ourselves; yes it did, as in a dream, a dream that lasted many years.

Reverend Logsdon's duties as a minister caused the Logsdon family to move frequently: from Panther to Bowling Green to Olive Hill to Corbin, and finally to Ludlow, which is directly across the Ohio from Cincinnati. Jimmie graduated from Ludlow High in the spring of 1940. In the fall of that year, he married his first wife, a girl named Evelyn.

In 1944 twenty-two-year-old Jimmie Logsdon decided to save America from the Nazis, and he enlisted in the Air Force. He was sent to an electronics school in Madison, Wisconsin, then was stationed in Texas where he was put to work as a lineman, repairing damaged B-17s. Two years later, in 1946, the Nazis having been put in their place, Logsdon was released from the Air Force. He returned to Kentucky and opened a radio shop in La Grange, about seventy miles south of Cincinnati. In addition to

selling and repairing radios Logsdon sold records, which he bought from Jimmie Skinner, a Cincinnati distributor and two-bit country singer. Young Logsdon had until now not been too involved in music, but listening to the hillbilly and blues records that he sold at his store inspired him to buy a guitar. He found one for $11.95 at Abe Davis's Pawnshop in Louisville.

I told you that this wasn't funny. I forgot to tell you that it wasn't interesting, either.

In the spring of 1948 Jimmie Logsdon began singing and strumming his $11.95 guitar before the WLOU microphone in Louisville. In 1950 he was given his own daily fifteen-minute program. Hank Williams was the sensation of the hillbilly nation at the time, and Jimmie Logsdon idolized him, even though Hank was younger than he. Logsdon listened constantly to Hank's records, especially the primitive rockers such as "Rootie Tootie," and it got to the point where his own voice was often mistaken for Hank's by the folks out there in WLOU radioland.

In 1951 Logsdon hired a guitarist, Howard Whitehead, and a fiddler, Lonnie Pierce, to back him on club dates. Not long after forming this trio, Logsdon cut his first record. Financed by a Louisville businessman named Art Rhodes and recorded in Cincinnati with the help of Jimmie Skinner, "It's All Over but the Shouting," released on the Harvest label, was a song that Logsdon had written about fighting with broads. He played the record on his own WLOU radio program, thus distinguishing himself as the only disc-jockey possessing foresight in the matter of the promising career of Jimmie Logsdon.

He left WLOU in 1952 to become senior announcer for the competing station WKYW. In the fall of that year Logsdon was booked to open a show for Hank Williams at the Louisville Municipal Auditorium. Hank, who was, at the age of twenty-nine, living his final months, was greatly impressed by Logsdon; and when Hank returned to Nashville he told Paul Cohen, who ran Decca Records in that city, that Logsdon should be given a contract to record.

Logsdon began recording for Decca on October 8, 1952. His first release on the label was "I Wanna Be Mama'd", which, these

Jimmie Logsdon. Rocket in pocket not shown.
(Courtesy of Country Music Foundation Library)

many years later, still stands as one of the finest of country music's many Oedipal love songs. His work for Decca, all of which was recorded at the Tulane Hotel in Nashville, was predominantly composed of country songs like those sung by his idol Hank the Great. (Hank died on January 1, not long after Logsdon began recording for Decca. A few weeks later, Logsdon wrote and cut a tribute called "Hank Williams Sings the Blues No More." On many of his subsequent recordings, Logsdon used Hank's old band, the Drifting Cowboys, to back him up.) But a good many of his Decca records were lurid rockabilly or boogie tunes, which perfectly suited his bluesy, dissipated voice. The best of these were "Let's Have a Happy Time" (co-written

with Vic McAlpin, who had collaborated frequently with Hank Williams), "Midnight Boogie," and a version of the Crowley, Louisiana, swamp shuffle "Good Deal Lucille." But, try as he might with straight country or rockabilly, Jimmie Logsdon could not score a hit, and Decca dropped him in early 1955.

(Courtesy of KICKS)

Later that year he cut two records for Randy Wood's Dot label, the best side of which, "Midnight Blues," received a good deal of airplay around Nashville but failed to break.

Jimmie Logsdon was on the skids. His career, which had never really been much to write home about, seemed to be dead. His wife was divorcing him. He, like his late idol, was fast becoming a pill-degenerate and a drunk. In 1956 he entered a hospital to overcome his weaknesses, and he stayed in that hospital for six long months.

He recorded again in 1957, singing into a portable tape machine in his fiddler's bedroom, while the fiddler played a maraca—actually a baby-bottle warmer filled with beans—behind him. The two songs he cut were released by Starday, a company not known for its high standards of technical excellence.

Later in 1957, under the name of Jimmie Lloyd, he cut two singles for Roulette. One of these sides, "I Got a Rocket in My Pocket"—a paean to the artist's dick—not only went on to become one of the most sought-after records in rockabilly history, but also inspired Iggy Pop to become the new Sinatra. Unfortunately for Jimmy Logsdon, it did little else.

He returned to Louisville in 1959, taking a job as a disc-jockey at WCKY, where he remained until 1964. In 1963 he cut a handful of records for King in nearby Cincinnati, but for the most part they were corny country-pop fare, such as "Mother's Flower Garden."

After 1964 Logsdon worked for several other radio stations, in Kentucky and in Alabama, recording occasionally for small, barely-there labels such as Jewel in Mt. Pleasant, Ohio, and Clark County in his home state.

He quit disc-jockeying in 1972, and, since 1973, has done no recording, but has earned his living working for the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Here, coming fully round in both tense and geography, our little story ends. We have learned much—something, at least—and spent no time in idle laughter. Rocket in his pocket, indeed.

Screamin' Jay Hawkins

Horror and the Foot-Shaped Ashtray

Screamin' Jay Hawkins stayed drunk through most of the psychedelic sixties. When I encountered him, in the early spring of 1973, he had put his Black & White scotch aside and was on the wagon. He drank coffee, a great deal of it, and orange juice. He smoked cigarettes, a great many of them. Sometimes he rolled his own Buglers, but on this day he smoked Lucky Strikes.

He was living at the Hotel Bryant, in a shabby room nine floors above Broadway in Times Square. With him were his wife, Ginny, and an obnoxious four-month-old Siamese cat named Cookie. A *Jet* calendar hung on one wall, variously weird hats from nails on another. The television was on, but without sound. Hawkins sat on the edge of the bed in a wool hat, Hawaiian-style sport-shirt, and horn-rimmed eyeglasses, taping a Frank Sinatra album from his stereo onto his reel-to-reel recorder. Beside him was a little ceramic foot-shaped ashtray in which he snuffed his Lucky Strikes.

At his feet was a mess of tapes—recordings he had made over the years for this company and that, but which, for this reason and that, had never been released. One tape bore a label with the words "Game of Love" on it. Thinking that it might be his version of the greaseball classic of that name which Wayne Fontana and His Mindbenders made in 1965, I asked Hawkins if he might let me hear it. He looked at me as if I had said something that I should not have said.

"Did you hear what song he wants to hear?" he said, turning

to his wife. She gave him a dirty look. He uttered small sounds of resignation and affixed the tape. Soon his slurred voice came through the speakers, addressing some unseen audience: "We are gathered here tonight, ladies and gentlemen, laying down some fine sounds that you haven't heard and probably will never hear on the radio, simply because Decca is a stupid-ass record company and refuses to—"

Hawkins laughed. "I didn't mean for you to hear that." He manipulated the fast-forward mechanism until he located "The Game of Love." It turned out not to be a version of the Wayne Fontana song, but a Screamin' Jay Hawkins original, a ballad about a man torn between his wife and another woman. As the song progressed, Ginny waxed ostensibly more piqued.

"All right, Ginny, you win," Hawkins spat as the song faded out.

Screamin' Jay Hawkins, doing what he had to do. (Courtesy of KICKS)

"Did you listen closely to that song? Did you?" Ginny flared at him in her Filipino accent.

"Will you come *on*," Hawkins groaned. "The lyrics keep repeating over and over and over and over that the wife finally won. So what's the problem? What's the argument? The tune is dedicated to the *wife*, you understand?"

"Yeah," Ginny yelled, "but at the end it says, 'I'm gonna love you forever!' Now, *what* does that imply, huh?"

"Just what it says! 'I'm gonna love you forever!' I'm talkin' to the *wife*!"

"Don't give me that! What you're saying is that the wife won but at the same time you're gonna love this other woman forever."

"Oh, for Godsakes, you misinterpret it!"

"No, no. Not me. Maybe *you* do!"

"Me! Come *on*, Ginny, who recorded the goddamn thing?"

"You! And the song says you're in love with this other . . ."

"Oh, come on, that's enough! I'm finished, I don't got no more to say."

"Well, then, you shouldn't have brought it up."

"God*damn*! Nick wanted to hear the tune! Blame Nick!"

"Well, you know, then, you, you don't have to . . ."

"Oh, man, come on. Let's not have an argument. It's only a goddamn song."

A strained stillness came, and Hawkins gazed vacantly into the little foot-shaped ashtray.

Jalacy J. Hawkins was born on July 18, 1929. "There were seven of us with one mother and different daddies," he explained. "My sister once told me that as long as my mother didn't mess with no black people, she had it made. She had babies by a Chinese man and a baby by a white man. My father was from Arabia. I understand when my mother was pregnant with me in Washington, they stoned, beat, and kicked her and forced her to get on a bus and go to Cleveland. The bus arrived in Cleveland just in time for her to have me and drop me at the nearest welfare center. Then she talked a tribe of Blackfoot Indians who were very wealthy into taking me out of that welfare home when I was eighteen months old."

He fought in the Cleveland Golden Gloves as a teenager. He quit high school in 1945 and went to work as an entertainer in the Special Services Division of the U.S. Army-Air Force, performing at service clubs throughout America, Germany, Japan, and Korea. In addition to singing and playing piano, he continued to pursue a career in boxing until 1949. In that year he defeated Billy McCann, the middleweight champion of Alaska, but the fight left Hawkins so badly beaten that he quit the business.

In 1952 he joined Tiny Grimes's band, both as a singer and as Grimes's chauffeur. Grimes had been one of Atlantic's first recording artists, signing with the label in December 1947, little more than a month after its start. It was with Tony Grimes and His Rockin' Highlanders, at Grimes's last Atlantic session, in January 1953, that Jay Hawkins made his first recording, "Screamin' Blues." It was deemed by Atlantic to be unsuitable for release.

Not long after that session, Hawkins joined Johnny Sparrow and His Sparrows at the Powelton Café in Philadelphia. Early the next year he cut two singles, "Baptize Me in Wine" and "I Found My Way to Wine" (he had not yet graduated to Black & White), for the little Timely label. (Apollo bought out Timely in the summer of 1954 and eventually, in 1957, reissued these early Hawkins recordings.) In 1955 Hawkins recorded for Mercury and for its new subsidiary, Wing. The Mercury single, "(She Put the) Wamee (On Me)," presaged the outrageous and macabre vocal styling for which Hawkins would soon gain notoriety. At the end of the year, on a single for Grand called "I Is," he first used the nickname Screamin' Jay. It was also for Grand that Hawkins first recorded his song "I Put a Spell on You."

"I wrote the song," Hawkins told me, "because I was going out with some girl who decided that she was gonna put me down. I decided that I didn't want her to put me down. So I wrote a song to her, and the song was 'I Put a Spell on You.' It was just a sweet ballad the way I cut it for Grand."

In January 1956 Stan Pat, who was Hawkins's manager of sorts, signed him to Wing. Recordings followed, but the deal

(Courtesy of KICKS)

proved to be otherwise barren, and in the summer of that year Hawkins signed with Okeh Records, Columbia's R&B subsidiary. His first Okeh session was held in New York on September 12. It was on that day that he created the monster that haunted him ever after.

"We were gonna cut a new version of 'I Put a Spell on You'," Hawkins recalled. "Arnold Matson, who was the head of Col-

umbia at the time, felt that we had to do something different in regards to the song. So he brought in a case of Italian Swiss Colony Muscatel, and we all got our heads bent—me, Panama Francis, Al Lukas, Leroy Kirkland, Big Al Sears, Sam Taylor, Mickey 'Guitar' Baker. We all got blind drunk.

"Ten days later, the record came out. I listened to it and I heard all those drunken screams and groans and yells. I thought, oh, my God."

The record became an underground sensation. Screamin' Jay Hawkins's vocal hallucinations were perceived as being invocatory of all manner of horrible things, from anal rape to cannibalism. Self-appointed guardians of morality made their displeasure known to the record company (which exhorted, "D.J.'s—Be brave," in an ad published in the November 24, 1956, issue of *Billboard*). The record was re-mastered so that its closing groan-coda was censored to a fast fade-out. This measure failed to appease, and the record was in the end banned by most radio stations. The pubescent sleaze-seekers of America, however, continued to buy the record in great numbers. It became a hit without a chart position.

"I didn't know what I had done," Hawkins said. "This record comes out and I've created a monster. Man, it was *weird*. I was forced to live the life of a monster. I'd go to do my act at Rockland Palace and there'd be all these goddamn mothers walking the street with picket signs: 'WE DON'T WANT OUR DAUGHTERS TO LOOK AT SCREAMIN' JAY HAWKINS!' I mean, I'm some kinda bogeyman. I come outa coffins. Skulls, snakes, crawlin' hands, fire, and all that mess."

He had trouble with the caskets he used in his acts. For his first few shows, beginning with Alan Freed's 1956 New York Paramount show, he had rented coffins. This had cost him about fifty dollars a throw. Then the National Casket Association accused him of "making fun of the dead," and sent word to all funeral parlors not to rent any more coffins to one Mr. Jalacy Hawkins. He was thus forced to buy his own, which cost him $850.

"Those were some trying years. God, the things I remember. There was this guy by the name of Bob Horn who did 'American

Bandstand' from the Philadelphia Arena, which was at Forty-sixth and Market in West Philadelphia. He got busted for a certain reason which isn't necessary to discuss at the present time, and that's when Dick Clark took over 'American Bandstand.' And when he did, he started off at the Steel Pier in Atlantic City, New Jersey. He called me to open his first show for him. He was so pleased with the opening that he asked me to stay over and do the second day also. His parting words to me were, 'If I can ever do anything for you, don't hesitate to call me.' And then when I made 'Shattered' and a few other records for Decca, I sent word to Dick Clark, asking him if he would please play my records on his show. The reply which I got back was: 'Who's Screamin' Jay Hawkins?' Man, there's some assholes in this business, some real assholes. People forget. Quickly.

"In 1957 I was on a show with the Cadillacs, Billy Williams, Billy & Lillie Ford, and Fats Domino. A young kid by the name of Paul Anka was on the show. He had just had a hit tune out called 'Diana.' I'm already tired, I just come off the road. Fats Domino was slated to close the show, but Fats canceled out for some reason which we don't have to go into here. My manager asked me to go on in Fats Domino's spot. So I insisted on the closing spot of the show, and I was politely told that Paul Anka was going to close the show. I said, 'To hell with Paul Anka.' So Paul Anka walks over to me and he says, 'I'll come to your funeral.' What a goddamn punk."

After a few years, Hawkins got sick of things. He felt that there was a vaguely organized conspiracy that kept his records from getting airplay after "I Put a Spell on You." His subsequent Okeh singles did not sell, nor did his remarkable 1958 Epic album, *At Home with Screamin' Jay Hawkins*. Records that he made for Decca, Chancellor, Enrica, and Roulette went unnoticed. In the summer of 1965 Nina Simone had a modest R&B hit with her Philips recording of "I Put a Spell on You." But two albums that Hawkins himself made for Philips, *What That Is* (1969) and *Screamin' Jay Hawkins* (1970), did not fare so well.

"I guess I've rubbed a lot of people the wrong way. But when you work your heart out for somebody and they pay you half

your money in cash and the other half by a check and that check bounces, or payment on it is stopped, or you spend your bread travelin' to a gig and work hard and then some cat stands there with five or six musclemen and tells you that he ain't gonna pay you because he didn't make his money, you get to the point where you start to question things. . . .

"I used to go with a girl in Philadelphia. Some disc-jockey hit her. I punched his face. He never played any of my records again. . . .

"In those days, a nigger wasn't supposed to talk back, wasn't supposed to open his goddamn mouth, wasn't even supposed to say the word 'nigger.' Now things have changed because they found out that some niggers will kill ya. It's as simple as that. In those days, nobody fought back . . . I can't be concerned with other people, because I'm a nigger, and I speak from a nigger's viewpoint. . . .

"I got fed up. I went to Honolulu for ten years because I figured the world wasn't ready for me. In the meantime, all these people are recording my goddamn stuff. Nina Simone, Alan Price, the Animals, Creedence Clearwater Revival, the Who, Them, Manfred Mann, the Seekers, Arthur Brown. Melvin Van Peebles copied my whole act and put it on Broadway. . . .

"I mean, I've had some piss luck. All those people but me makin' money with my songs. I started Chuck Willis wearin' turbans. I started Little Richard wearin' capes. Look at Lord Sutch and Arthur Brown. Look at *Shaft*. Look at *Blacula*. [Hawkins was offered the title role in that 1972 movie by Jack Hammer, but he turned it down.] At one time or another, they've all taken a little something from me, and I get the impression that everybody's going places with what I was doing fifteen goddamn years ago. Everybody but me . . .

"Decca promised me the world if I'd only record for them. So what happened? Nothing. The record doesn't even get played once on the radio. Jesus, I recorded a country song for Philips ["Too Many Teardrops"]. I mean, that song was *something*. The steelplayer was from the California Symphony Orchestra, and the rest of the band were jazz musicians. So what does the record

company do? They only release it in *Hawaii!* Did you ever in your life hear of anything like that? I cut 'Itty Bitty Pretty One,' and what happens? A week later the Jackson 5 record it and have a hit with it, and meanwhile the company I cut for [Hot Line] goes bankrupt and the record never gets distributed. It doesn't make sense to me."

It was fortunate for Hawkins that his music was at least more appreciated overseas than it was in his native land. He told me that his bimonthly royalty statements brought respectable residuals from England, Germany, Japan, Australia, Spain, Turkey, Finland, Mexico, and other countries. His Philips recording of "Constipation Blues" was actually a hit in Japan—and only Japan—in 1968. ("It was the first time I'd ever been constipated, so I decided to write a song about it. To this day, I don't know what brought it on. I thought it was pretty unusual, you know? I was in the hospital at the time, and I said to myself, 'A subject like this must be put to music.' I guess the pains of not bein' able to get it out were understood by the Japanese.")

As weary and resentful of the Screamin' Jay Hawkins image as he had become, Hawkins didn't succeed in ridding himself of its curse in the years after our meeting on opposite sides of the little foot-shaped ashtray. What recognition and rewards he has since received have been granted more to the monster than to him. The Rolling Stonesasked him to open their spectacular Madison Square Garden show of 1981, but only with the understanding that Hawkins did not perform without his coffin or his other garish gimmicks of old.

There was a plaintive sincerity in Hawkins's voice when he told me, "If it were up to me I wouldn't be Screamin' Jay Hawkins. My screamin' was always just my way of being happy on stage. James Brown, he did an awful lot of screamin', but he didn't become Screamin' James Brown.

"I mean, I've got a voice. Why can't people just take me as a regular singer without makin' a bogeyman out of me? My musical background is people like Roy Milton, Wynonie Harris, Roy Brown, Cleanhead Vinson, Jay McShann, Louis Jordan, Varetta Dillard, Big Maybelle, Roy Hamilton, people like that. I

come along and get a little weird, and all of a sudden I'm a monster or something. People won't listen to me as a singer. I'm some kind of monster. I don't wanna be a black Vincent Price. I'm sick of it, I hate it! I wanna do goddamn opera! I wanna *sing*! I wanna do *Figaro*! I wanna do 'Ave Maria!' 'The Lord's Prayer!' I wanna do real singing. I'm sick of being a monster."

Wanda Jackson

Laced by Satan, Unlaced by the Lord

Wanda Lavonne Jackson was, simply and without contest, the greatest menstruating rock-'n'-roll singer whom the world has ever known. Born in Maud, Oklahoma, on October 20, 1937, the cherished daughter of Tom and Nellie Jackson, she was a prodigious child in more ways than one. At the age of nine, she had been encouraged to play the piano by her father, an indigent laborer who had himself, in days of greater leisure, passed his hands with some degree of unpolished skill across the keys of that instrument. Soon after, of her own will, she turned to the guitar. As her mother was quoted as saying (in an article in the May 1966 issue of *Hoedown,* one of the outstanding illiterate periodicals of an outstandingly illiterate day), "Wanda wasn't like other children after the guitar came into her life."

Not like other children, indeed. At the age of thirteen, a year after her family moved to Oklahoma City, where her father had landed a job as a used-car salesman, Wanda already had her own nylon stockings, brassieres, and a daily radio show—the latter broadcast by KLPR, a station two blocks from Capitol Hill High School, where she attended classes with her legs crossed.

In late 1953 and early 1954, when she was sixteen, Wanda, in addition to her radio show, which had been expanded from fifteen minutes to a half-hour daily, sang locally with the Merle Lindsay Band. Then, in the spring of 1954, fortune tugged at her hem. Hank Thompson, whose Brazos Valley Boys were the most successful Western-swing band of the day, heard Wanda on

Wanda Jackson with Billy Gray, flesh on flesh, hat on hat. (Courtesy of Country Music Foundation Library)

KLPR and telephoned her with an invitation to tour with him and the Brazos Valley Boys.

Thompson brought Wanda together with his arranger and bandleader, Billy Gray. That spring Wanda made her first record, a duet with Gray (who, with Hank Thompson and others, had written it) called "You Can't Have My Love," released by Decca in June, a few days before Wanda finished her junior year at Capitol Hill. She toured the Northeast with Hank Thompson that summer, and recorded more songs for Decca.

Her Decca records—there were a total of seven of them, released from June 1954 through December 1956—were basically country love songs ("Lovin', Country Style," "The Right to Love," and so on), with occasional lapses into the cornbread abyss, such as the 1955 "Tears at the Grand Ole Opry" and the 1956 "Wasted," which she wrote with her father. None of these records did much for Wanda, aside from getting her cast as the

lead in her high school's annual musical.

In September 1955, a few months after graduating from Capitol Hill, Wanda became a regular performer on "Ozark Jubilee," the weekly ABC-TV series originating from Springfield, Missouri. (Wanda appeared on the show, on and off, for several years, as its named changed to "Country Music Jubilee" in 1957, and then to "Jubilee U.S.A." in 1958. The show was canceled abruptly in 1960 when its host, country singer Red Foley, was busted for tax fraud.) In late 1955 and early 1956 she toured with Elvis Presley, who had recently been signed by RCA and was on the verge of becoming the biggest thing since Coca-Cola. In April 1956 Wanda signed a management deal with Jim Halsey, who also handled Hank Thompson. Halsey took her to Capitol Records, the company for which Hank Thompson had been recording since 1947; and that summer of 1956, in Los Angeles, eighteen-year-old Wanda Jackson began to sing the way the Devil had intended her to sing.

From her first Capitol record, "I Gotta Know," released in August 1956, to her version of the Robins' "Riot in Cell Block #9," released in February 1961, Wanda showed herself to be one of the most exceptional rock-'n'-roll stylists of her or any other day. Her voice, a wild-fluttering thing of sexy subtleties and sudden harshnesses, feral feline purrings and raving banshee shriekings, was a vulgar wonder to hear. She was a girl who could growl. Furthermore, she was the only girl who could hold her own with the big guys of rock-'n'-roll's golden era, as her 1955–56 tour with Elvis and her 1957 tour with Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins attested.

Many of the early Capitol recordings, and the best of them, were fast, loud songs about ambivalent carnality. "Hot Dog! That Made Him Mad" (1956) was a celebration of bitchdom. "Let's Have a Party" (1960) was a lewd-voiced invocation of prophylactic love. In "Mean Mean Man" (1960) the joys of being slapped around were praised through wet lips. Best of all, however, was "Fujiyama Mama," released in the first cold days of 1958. (Anisteen Allen's original had been brought out by Capitol three winters before, in early 1955.) Wanda sang Earl Burrows's audacious lyrics as if she meant every word of them:

I been to Nagasaki, Hiroshima, too—
The things I did to them, baby, I can do to you.
'Cause I'm a Fujiyama mama, and I'm just
about to blow my top—
Fujiyama-yama, Fujiyama—
And when I start eruptin', ain't nobody gonna
make me stop.

The Shibaura Electric Company of Japan issued the record for ¥350 in a picture sleeve that showed Wanda against the background of sacred Fujisan.

Not even twenty years old, Wanda Jackson sounded like she could fry eggs on her mons veneris. And that, more than anything, was the problem; for while her records were among the most striking and finely wrought of their time—and they were finely wrought on every level, produced as they were by the consummate West Coast studio craftsman of the fifties, Ken Nelson, and utilizing as they did the talents of guitarist Joe Maphis and unsung-hero pianist Merrill Moore—the public was simply not prepared to accept a young lady who looked and sang as Wanda Jackson did. It was too hot a package to sell over the counter. Teresa Brewer, Connie Francis, yes; Wanda Jackson, no. Of all the records she made for Capitol from 1956 to 1960, only one, "Let's Have a Party," appeared on the charts, and even then only as high as Number 37.

In 1961 Wanda began recording in Nashville, recrossing her legs and veering again towards tamer country stuff. "Right or Wrong," released in May of that year, hit Number 9 on the C&W charts, Number 29 on the pop charts. The cover photo of her *Right or Wrong* album, issued at the end of August (it was her fourth album, and the first to sell moderately well), provided the last glimpse of Wanda as *la bimbo fatale du rock 'n' roll,* showing her pouting, her extramusical blessings accentuated by a tightly laced corset.

But what the Devil laced, God unlaced. While she was fortunate enough to make a few dollars more with softer, more moralistic songs ("A Girl Don't Have to Drink to Have Fun," she vouched in 1967; two years more and it was a limping version of

(Courtesy of Capitol Records)

"If I Had a Hammer"), Wanda's fire was out. In October 1961 she married an IBM programmer named Wendell Goodman. A daughter, Gina Gail, came the next year; a son, Gregory Jackson, in 1964. From Fujiyama mama to hibachi hostess: such are the wages of survival in a democracy of mediocrity.

Wanda recorded for Capitol throughout the 1960s, into the early seventies. From 1965 to 1967, she had her own syndicated TV program, "Music Village." Her final Capitol album, *Country Keepsakes,* came out in January 1973. A year later she appeared briefly at the bottom of the country charts with "Come on Home to This Lonely Heart," a single on the Myrrh gospel label. In 1975 came a Myrrh album, *Now I Have Everything,* and a few more followed as the seventies faded away. Then, finally, the voice that had been too hot to handle twenty years before was heard no more. As it is writ: menopause hath no mercy in the land. Or something like that.

Johnny Ace

Number One With a Bullet

The boy called Johnny Ace was brought here by death. He was not like those who came before him; he did not know the Devil from the old days. He was the first fallen angel, the first lost mother's son of rock-'n'-roll, eaten up and spat out by fame before he'd had a chance to read Virgil's words on the back of the dollar bill.

John Marshall Alexander, Jr., came into the world on June 9, 1929, in Memphis. He was one of six sons and three daughters born to the Reverend and Mrs. John Alexander. Like most preachers' boys, Johnny played the piano. He went to La Rose Grammar School, then to Booker T. Washington High School. He enlisted in the Navy at the end of World War Two. After basic training, he was stationed in Orange, Virginia. The closest body of water was Lake Anna. He got married, and he had two children. The boy was named Glenn, the girl was named Sandra. It could have all evanesced into middle-class pleasance; but it didn't.

By the end of 1949 Johnny had become involved with the Beale Street Blues Boys, an important Memphis group led by tenor saxophonist Adolph Duncan. The lead singer of the Beale Streeters was nineteen-year-old Robert Calvin Bland, who later became famous as Bobby "Blue" Bland; the guitarist was Riley "B.B." King.

The Beale Streeters were the premier band of Memphis throughout 1950 and 1951. Then, at the end of 1951, Bobby Bland received his draft notice; in early 1952 B.B. King, who was recording for RPM, set off on his own.

In January 1952, just before he entered the service, Bland cut four sides for Modern at Sam Phillips's studio. Johnny accompanied him on piano. He also continued to play on the Saturday afternoon "Beale Street Blues Boys" program on radio station WDIA. New musicians had been brought in, and the reshuffled Beale Streeters were now billed as "Bee Bee King's Original Band." It was on one of those WDIA shows that Johnny surrendered to the instigation of Earl Forrest and began to sing.

It was at this time that disc-jockey James Mattis started Duke Records with the idea of capitalizing on the local talent not already signed to RPM or other companies to whom Sam Phillips was selling his recordings. Johnny signed with Duke in the spring of 1952. It was understood from the beginning that Johnny's actual surname would not be used, so that his father, the Reverend, might be saved from any shame.

Johnny Ace's first record was released in early June. Like most of the records that followed—there were only ten—it coupled a slow, melancholy song ("My Song") with a hard, bluesy rocker ("Follow the Rule"). Wondrously, this record—by a boy no one had ever heard of, on a little Southern label no one knew—became a hit. "My Song" entered the national R&B charts during the last week of July, and it rose until it hit Number 1. It remained on the charts for five months.

"Cross My Heart," Johnny's second single, was released in December. It too became a hit. By then Don Robey, the black Jew who had been running Peacock Records in Houston since 1949, had moved in on James Mattis. Soon Mattis was bought out, and Duke was a part of Robey's Houston operation. In March 1953 Johnny went on tour with Willie Mae Thornton, whose Peacock recording of "Hound Dog" was beginning to gather momentum.

Johnny's third record, "The Clock," coupled with the instrumental "Aces Wild," was released in June 1953. Like the record that had been released the previous June, it hit Number 1 on the R&B charts. "Saving My Love for You," his fourth record, came out in November. It was another hit.

The whole thing was uncanny, really. All he had done, this

THE LATE JOHNNY ACE

Booking the dead, 1955. (Courtesy of KICKS)

preacher's son whose first twenty years on earth had been a dull vacillation between being and nothingness, typified by his joining the Navy and going no farther than a five-dollar bus ticket would have gotten him; all he had done was opened his mouth and sung. Fame and fortune had been instantly his, not for a moment, but for every moment since. No rise to lasting fame had ever been so sudden, nor would any other ever be. It *was* uncanny. His records were fine, but they were not so fine as all this. He was not even an accomplished performer. The month before "Saving My Love for You" was released, he had appeared at the Apollo Theatre in New York. Reviewing his show, *Variety* found him "too stiff and wooden." It was concluded that he possessed a smooth baritone voice, "but unfortunately his song

salesmanship isn't commensurate with the quality of his voice." Then why? He had summoned a greater congregation, wrung more gold from its purse, than any Protestant God's furtive-copulating sermoner ever could; and there really was no reason why.

A fifth single, "Please Forgive Me," came in May 1954. It was a hit, but not of the magnitude of those that had come before it. It spent only two weeks on the R&B charts, and rose only to Number 10. His sixth record, "Never Let Me Go," was the first of Johnny Ace's records not to make the charts. It was released in September 1954. By then, another Memphis boy, Elvis Presley, who had listened to the Beale Streeters during his high school years, was on his way to becoming the new rage.

Johnny's lucky seventh single, "Pledging My Love," recorded with the Johnny Otis Orchestra, was scheduled to be released in the first week of the new year, 1955. The song had been written for Johnny by Fats Washington and Don Robey. (It was, in any event, they who took the credit for the song.) The flip side, however, had been written by Johnny himself. It was a tough, brassy rocker called "No Money," and it was arguably the best piece of work that Johnny had ever done. "I'm in this world alone!" he ended the song, as Johnny Board's Orchestra swelled to a climax behind him.

By the time that the record was released, Johnny was no longer in this world, alone or otherwise. Though he had more than most twenty-five-year-old boys, or their fathers, might dare to dream of having, he did not have it all.

It happened backstage at the Houston City Auditorium on Christmas Eve, 1954, little more than an hour after he had signed the papers for a shining new 1955 Oldsmobile. It was late, and Christmas was almost there. He held a .32 revolver to his right temple, pulled the trigger, and blew what little brains he had to kingdom-come. His eyes filled with blood, his scrawny limbs convulsed, and, in the words of Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton, who was there, "that kinky hair of his shot straight out like porcupine quills." He was pronounced dead on Christmas morning.

The accepted story is that Johnny was playing Russian roulette. Johnny Otis, who produced, arranged, and backed Ace on many of his recordings, recalled the singer "clowning with a loaded pistol in his hotel room in Tampa one day till he drove his valet to tears, what with pointing the gun at him and laughing. I tried to talk with him, but he just laughed and took another drink and kept on pointing the damn thing. I remembered this bad habit of his when Willie Mae gave me the story. She said there were guests in the dressing-room, among them a young couple. Johnny kept pointing the gun at the young lady and the guy with her resented it, telling Johnny, 'I don't appreciate what you're doing. If you have to point a loaded gun, point it at yourself.' Whereupon Johnny put the gun to his temple and pulled the trigger. He was used to playing a kind of controlled Russian roulette, but this time he made a fatal mistake because the hammer fell on a loaded chamber."

There is another story, but lawyers will not let it be printed here, since it implicates living people who have lawyers of their own.

"Pledging My Love" was released on schedule. *Billboard* was correct in choosing it as "This Week's Best Buy." Popular culture has always loved the self-killed. The record hit the R&B charts immediately, and it rose to Number 1. In February it crossed to the pop charts, and it entered the Top Twenty. Singers, songwriters, and record companies rushed to seek gold in the grave-dirt. Varetta Dillard's record, "Johnny Has Gone," was first, released by Savoy in mid-January. Hollywood Records was almost as fast with its two-sided "tribute" single, "Why, Johnny, Why" by Johnny Moore's Blazers, featuring singer Linda Hayes, and "Johnny Ace's Last Letter" by Frankie Irwin. Johnny Fuller's version of "Johnny Ace's Last Letter" came next, on the Aladdin label. The Rovers' "Salute to Johnny Ace" was put out by Music City. From Don Robey's headquarters in Houston came the Peacock single, "In Memory," by the Johnny Otis Orchestra with Marie Adams. Perhaps the most grotesquely pitiful of all was the single released by King Records on February 10: "Johnny Has Gone" c/w "Johnny's Still Singing" by the five Wings. The

former explains how Johnny was called to heaven because the angels had heard an advance copy of "Pledging My Love" and enjoyed it so much that they decided on recruiting Johnny for a command performance. The latter assured listeners that "Johnny's still singing somewhere up above." Promotional copies of the single went to disc-jockeys with a note informing them that "The Five Wings are from New York City and take up singing after regular working hours. . . . They were selected as the group to sing these specially written songs. . . . Each side of this record is fitting memorial to Ace." One could only hope that the Five Wings were not foolish enough to give up their day-jobs.

The April 1955 issue of *Rhythm and Blues,* published in February, eulogized that "On December 24th, 1954, Johnny Ace received his call from the Great Beyond. Tho' he has departed, his music will remain with us down through all ages as a reminder of a wonderful singer and a wonderful man. Our Johnny is gone, but he shall never, never be forgotten." Side bet.

"Anymore," a recording on which Johnny had played vibes instead of piano, was issued in June. The *coup de grâce* was delivered by Don Robey in July of 1956, when Duke released a final posthumous single, "Still Love You So." This record, Duke 154, was advertised together with Duke 155, a single by a character called Buddy Ace. "Complete your collection with this *LAST* record on the LATE GREAT *JOHNNY ACE,*" the ad copy implored; "Start your collection with the *FIRST* record released on this up and coming artist."

What exactly occurred that long-ago Christmas Eve in Houston will never be known. Presuming that the incident had nothing to do with business—and I think it had nothing to do with business—leaves us to wonder why Johnny pulled the trigger. Surely there must have been a less ruinous way to deal with the problem of last-minute Christmas shopping. No, I believe it had to be something deeper than that. One thing alone is certain: he sure wasn't thinking of the porter. In the end, what one really wonders about is who got the Olds. They don't make them like that anymore.

Esau Smith

The Hairy and the Smooth

I first heard about him in the winter of 1982, from a half-assed south Jersey wise guy who used to come by a bar I occasionally worked at in Newark. The wise guy liked me because I had gotten tickets for his kids to see the Rolling Stones at Madison Square Garden. Since then, if it was a Thursday or a Friday (those were the days I usually worked there), and if he was on his way to or from the airport, and if he had time to kill, he would drop in, have two J&Bs, and leave a five-dollar tip. Though the tickets had cost me nothing but the price of a telephone call and the minor abasement of having to exchange hollow pleasantries with a record-company publicist, they ended up bringing me in more than two hundred dollars in five-dollar tips. Needless to say, he was my favorite customer.

He knew that I wrote ("Nicky the Book-Writer" was the droll sobriquet that he had bestowed on me) and that I had written a lot about rock 'n' roll. This, and those tickets, was why he told me what he did.

I did not believe a word of what he said, though I felt that he believed it, or, rather, that he did not disbelieve it. The more he told me, the more I grinned.

"Yeah, huh?" he concluded. "Well, not for nothing, but the guy's all right."

"Not in the head, it sounds," I said.

It was left at that for more than a year. I did not think again of what I had heard from my five-dollar wise-guy acquaintance about the character called Smitty who worked at his—it was

partly his, anyway; I later found out that it had almost as many partners as customers—after-hours joint in Los Angeles. It was so patently incredible that it failed to titillate that gullible craving for contradictory evidence to the dull, known facts of life which we euphemistically call inquisitiveness. I had more important things to think about, such as why I was working twelve-hour shifts in a bar instead of leaving five-dollar tips to some other *citrullo* who was working twelve-hour shifts in a bar. Like the man said, life is funny. Soon it got funnier.

In the spring of 1983 I was sent to China by *Vanity Fair* magazine. On my way home, I stopped for a few days in Los Angeles. Sitting in a bar on Olympic Boulevard one morning, I realized that I was only a few blocks from the after-hours joint that, back in Newark, I had so often been invited to visit. Maybe the five-dollar tipper himself would be there, I thought.

It was like every other after-hours joint I have ever been in, right down to the indoor-outdoor carpeting and the regulation ash-blonde dyke barmaid. There were three guys at the bar and four at the blackjack table. I took one look at the dealer. In a sudden, jarring instant, I knew that he was Smitty, and I knew—rather, I wanted to know—that his story was true. I put down five twenties and told him that I wanted ten-dollar chips.

"You can split pairs," he said. "Push goes to the house."

A couple of hours later we were sitting in Philippe's, eating lamb sandwiches and drinking beer. He told me that I had missed what's-his-face from Jersey by three days.

"He's some kind of guy, ain't he?" he grinned. "The joint is just a candy store. Him, a few other guys. I get a piece of the table, a small piece. He's got a broad out here or some shit. He hardly even looks at the joint's receipts when he comes by. He's good people, though, I'll tell you that. He's done good by me."

I agreed, told him about the Rolling Stones tickets and the fives.

"That's him."

As we eased, with our beer and our small talk, into the intimacy, however wary, of devious-cruising, chance-crossed kindred, I asked him straightforward if what our mutual acquaint-

ance had told me about him was true.

He started slightly, looking as if to say, "He told you that?" Then he smiled sidewise. "You gonna write about it?"

"If somebody pays me."

"I like your attitude," he said. "But I wasn't made with a finger. You know what's-his-name. To me, that's as good a credential as you could have. That you're a writer, that doesn't mean anything to me. Don't get me wrong, I respect anybody who's self-employed. Hell, I like to read; I just don't have much time for it. You know who I like? I like Eric Ambler. You ever meet him?" I confessed that I had not. "He's probably dead by now," Smitty said. He drank some beer and looked away for a moment. Then he raised his left hand and turned it. "Anyway," he said, "if it is true, what does it matter?" I shrugged, and he smiled. We ordered two more lamb sandwiches and two more beers.

"Look at it this way," he said. "Some guy in yellow pants—I'm using this as an analogy; see, I read—he walks around shifting his belt like there's a gun in it, telling everybody that Jimmy Hoffa's buried under the track at the Meadowlands. Next thing you know, there's a thousand guys in yellow pants telling ten thousand guys in blue pants that Jimmy Hoffa's buried in the Meadowlands. It ain't long before the whole world—green pants, pink pants, the whole shooting match—thinks that Jimmy Hoffa's buried in the Meadowlands. Meanwhile, maybe he's working in a hardware store selling the shovels that nobody's buying to dig him up with. Do you follow me?"

My imagination dyed his graying clove-brown hair black, shaved off his moustache, restored to fullness the vestigial Southern accent that softly colored his speech.

"What I mean is, everybody believes that Jesse Garon Presley died at birth, but nobody's ever bothered to look up the death certificate."

I didn't nod, I didn't say anything. I just kept looking at him.

"As is usually the case, the truth is rather dull. There wasn't any dead child. There was just one mouth too many to be fed by some poor old sucker who couldn't saddle a Guernsey cow if he had four niggers holdin' it still for him. As far back as I can

remember, I lived with my Aunt Reenie, in Belden, about ten miles from where I was born. I lucked out pretty good. Aunt Reenie was a good lady. She was my mother's cousin, a few years older than her. She's dead now close to twenty years.

"We were together a lot when we were little kids, especially in the summertime. I remember spending a lot of days playing near Chickasaw Village, which was about halfway between Tupelo and Belden. Me, Elvis, my mother, and Aunt Reenie. We got along. There didn't seem to be anything odd about the situation at all. If anything, I think I felt like I was better off. I ate better than Elvis, I knew that much.

"We were a lot alike. He was a little taller than me even then. He was a little slower, maybe, a little quieter. I used to clench my hand like this, like I was holding something in it. 'Come here,' I'd tell him, 'look what I got.' When he put his face real close to my hand—*wap*—I'd smack him. What I never got over," he laughed in a bemused way, "was that he kept falling for it, over and over again." He paused. "Real interesting, huh?" To me it was, but I didn't say so. "It was Aunt Reenie who got us started in on the guitars, little old toy things she sent away for to Sears. We must've been ten then. It was Christmas, I know that much. We thought we were regular little Gene Autrys.

"It seems like I skipped as soon as I was old enough to raise a hard-on. I couldn't have been more than fourteen. Mom and Elvis and my father had moved up to Memphis right about then. I could have gone with them. I really think they wanted me to go with them. But . . . " He moved his shoulders.

"I was a crazy kid. I walked right out there onto Highway 15 like I owned it. It wasn't like I was running away, really. Aunt Reenie knew I was going. I didn't say I was going, and she didn't say she knew I was going; but it was understood. She had a Bible—she had two or three of them, but there was this one little old beat-up one that looked like it might've been autographed by Jesus Christ—that she kept a ten-dollar bill in. She took to leaving it on the wicker chair by the door, instead of on the mantel. This was her way of letting me know that she knew. I took them both, the bible and the ten.

"I ended up in Pascagoula. That's sort of the Pismo Beach of Mississippi. For a week I just sat out on the pier, eatin' vanilla cookies and smokin' cigarettes. At night I slept under it. Man, I thought I was it. The folding money started turning into silver, and I learned my first great lesson: a man can buy only so many vanilla cookies and Camels with a ten-dollar bill. I got a job as a delivery boy for a butcher. He was an old Irish guy named Davey Blue. I gave him a line of shit about how I was an orphan a long way from home. I think I took it from *Boys Town.* Aunt Reenie took me to see that one Thanksgiving or something when it came around, I guess so that I could see how well off I was. Anyway, Old Davey blue had a heart of gold—hands like rusted, musselled-up anchors, but a heart of gold. He paid me two dollars a day, and he got me a little room in a boarding-house—I guess that's what you'd call it—that cost five dollars a week. It was a great set-up for a crazy kid that didn't want to do anything but eat cookies and smoke cigarettes on the end of a pier. I wrote a letter to Aunt Reenie, telling her that I was fine and for her not to worry. I didn't put a return address on it, though.

"I don't think I worked for Davey for more than a year. I lied about my age and got a job on the platforms. I guess, what with the Korean draft and all, they weren't being too choosey. So there I was, gone from ten to fifty dollars a week. And I was stashing most of it away, too, since my tastes still hadn't gotten too far beyond cigarettes and vanilla cookies—except for a certain girl that I ended up marrying, which I don't really want to go into here, except to say that she was the reason for my next move. I skipped on her and moved to Hattiesburg. That was in 1953, and I was a wise old man of eighteen.

"When I first hit Hattiesburg, I went to work on the platforms there, for Red Ball. That was one good thing about platform jobs in those days: if you had one in Miami, you could get one in Seattle. It was in Hattiesburg that I took up where I'd left off on the guitar, which, to tell the truth, wasn't all that far along, maybe the third page of *Alfred's Easy Guitar Lessons.* The foreman at the job had him a hole-in-the-wall bottle club out near the Okatoma turn-off, and we used to play there on weekend nights, me and

this other kid who must have been stuck on page three of whatever the piano equivalent of *Alfred's* is. We'd do a lot of country stuff. Eddy Arnold, Lefty Frizzell, Hank Williams were real big then. People wanted to hear that stuff. We didn't only do country. Hell, we butchered just about every sort of music known to man, and a few that ain't. We had fun, and we made a few extra bucks.

"That's when I made my first record." He laughed and shook his head in good-natured delectation of what seemed to him to be a cherished, secret folly. "And what a record it was." Here he affected the voice of a deep-Southern radio pitchman: "'Bosom Divine' by Jesse Presley with Jo-Jo Fineaux and His Hattiesburg Hepcats." He laughed again; I with him. "Jo-Jo Fineaux was the kid that played piano with me at the club, and the Hattiesburg Hepcats were sons of the guy who put the record out. He owned a furniture store there in town. I think that record sold a good dozen copies, unless that old bastard with the furniture store made his own sons pay for theirs. I still got a few at the house. I'll bring one by the joint for you if you want.

"Like I said, I was making money. The trouble was, I was also learning how to spend it. I fell in with this guy that was on the arm at the club there. He did some small-time shylocking around town, and he had a cut of the numbers action, which was probably about two rolls of nickels a day. I fell in with him, taking numbers and shylocking for him down on the platforms. All the numbers action there—I guess it's still the same today—runs out of New Orleans, not out of Jackson like most people think. So, through this one guy I meet this other guy, blah-blah-blah, one thing leads to another, and I move to New Orleans. I took single action all around St. Louis Cathedral there. I worked straight salary. I could maybe have made more working percentage, but this way I didn't risk sharing any losses. A hundred dollars a week bought a lot of vanilla cookies thirty years ago, I'll tell you that much. I was like a pig in shit. I was still crazy, though, I remember I was drunk one night, and this broad at the bar—I didn't even know her—she was complaining that she had to go to New York to visit her sister and it was freezing in New

York and she didn't have a coat, blah-blah-blah. I went out and bought her one, just like that." He paused. "Usually when I tell that story, I make it a mink, but it was just one of those ski-jacket things.

"It was right around then that I found out that Elvis was turning into tomorrow's news. I heard his record 'Milkcow Blues Boogie' on the radio. It was the third one he'd made. Jesus, I was excited. I hadn't talked to any of them, not even Aunt Reenie, in five years. But I really wanted to get in touch now, you know? I remember putting all those nickels in that pay phone, calling Aunt Reenie. She sounded a lot older, like those five years had been fifty, and she sounded like she was hearing from a ghost. 'Your daddy's been tellin' folks that'—and she couldn't finish. The old bastard had written me off! Elvis was starting to make it. People were asking questions, doing interviews and such. Somebody—it couldn't have been the old man; his wiles had quit somewhere round that first plus-sign in the second grade—somebody must have come up with this wonderful solution to the problem of the twin that wasn't around. Jesus, I felt like . . . " He sighed, and his exhalation was like an erasure of years.

"I gave Aunt Reenie two phone numbers, my number at the apartment and the number at the bar where I hung out. I told her to give them to Elvis or my mother, or to my old man if he wanted them. 'You still got that Bible?' she asked me. I told her that I did. 'Good boy,' she said, 'good boy.'

Right after that, I got pinched taking the single action. I ended up doing three months for those guys down there. So I had no way of knowing if Elvis, or anybody, had called me back. The bartender at that place I hung out at was worthless, about as good with messages as he was with mixed drinks. I just didn't know. To this day . . . " He laid his fist without force upon the table. "And a few years later, at my mother's funeral, the way the old man tried to—ah, fuck it; the beer's talking now.

"Anyway, nobody called me once I was back out, that much I know, I figured, hell, what is this? I still had the foolish pride of a boy who'd been hit but not knocked down. I dropped my real

name, came up with 'Esau Smith.' I had finally gotten to reading that Bible, and that's where I got the 'Esau' from. Look in Genesis and you'll see what I mean, or what I meant then. This character down there who ran a juke-box label had been after me to cut a record. I said I would under the condition that he put my new name on it. He finally agreed. That's how that second and final work of art came into being. I don't even know if I have any of those to give you. After that, I just sort of let the singing lie. I will tell you one thing, though. I always enjoyed Elvis's records, and I was always proud of him.

"One thing I knew for sure," his voice livened, "was that I wasn't cut out for doing more than a day's time. I talked to my friends. They put me down in some basement dive spinning a Big Six. Eventually I moved up to dealing. I was good at it. I was sharp and I was straight. They took me out of the basement and started me working at the fancy joint on Carrollton. I kept my nose clean and did well. I always dealt an honest game. Hell, in this racket you don't have to cheat. That push-goes-to-the-house shit breaks 'em all in the end.

"I stayed there until 1964, then I came out here. By then I was plain old Johnny Smith. I miss New Orleans once in a while. It's some kind of town, that's for sure. But it's quieter here. I have a wife, two kids. I ain't getting any younger." He took a last, slow swig, and he looked at his watch. "Then again, at least I'm still here."

I went back to see him the following morning. The same guys were sitting at the bar and at the blackjack table. An additional, younger patron had bestowed his presence upon the scene. He leaned over the bar, asking the barmaid if she liked raw oysters.

Smitty—or whatever it is that I should call him—bought me a drink. He alluded in no way to our conversation of the previous day. Nor, his eyes and manner insinuated, should I. Sure enough, he had brought the records for me. "Now, remember," he said lightly as he gave them to me, "if you listen to these things, it's just some silly-ass kid fucking around."

I smiled and thanked him.

"You gonna write me up?" he finally asked, in a clip.

"I don't know," I told him.

"Yeah, well, whatever."

A few days later, when I was back home, I put on one of the records, a 78 with a still-glossy blue label, onto the turntable. It lacked that certain salability without which few things in this world succeed. But it was, notwithstanding the Hattiesburg Hepcats, one of the finest things that I had ever heard, and it made me smile and it made me laugh.

I dreamt last night of a bosom divine,
A bosom so pristine, so pure,
And from it bubbled whiskey like
milk;
I sucked till my poor jowls were sore.

If I never see him again, I'll never cease to wonder about him. Just as he, most likely, will never cease to wonder if that phone rang thirty years ago. The man, as usual, was right. Life is funny.

What That Was

A Chronology of the Coming of Rock 'n' Roll

1945

January

"Tell Me You'll Wait for Me" by Johnny Moore's Three Blazers (Atlas 107) is released.

February

Ezra Pound, indicted for treason, is incarcerated in the criminal ward of St. Elizabeths Hospital, Washington, D.C.

March

Joe, Jules, and Saul Bihari form Modern Records in Los Angeles. The company's first release is Hadda Brooks's "Swingin' the Boogie" (Modern 101). Louis Jordan's "Caladonia Boogie" (Decca 8670) is released.

April

Ed and Leo Mesner, owners of the Philharmonic Music Shop in Los Angeles, inaugurate their Philo Records company with the release of Illinois Jacquet's "Flying Home" (Philo 101).

June

"Sweet Marijuana Brown" by the Barney Bigard Sextet (Black & White 13) is released. "Guitar Boogie" by the Rambler Trio (Super Disc 1004) is released.

July

Four-Star Records is founded in Los Angeles by Richard A. Nelson.

August

America drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

September

Wynonie Harris's first solo record, "Around the Clock" (Philo 103), is released. Louis Prima's "Felicia

No Capecia" (Majestic 7154) is released.

December

"Who Put the Benzedrine in Mrs. Murphy's Ovaltine" by Harry "The Hipster" Gibson (Musicraft 346) is released.

1946

January

"Milton's Boogie" by Roy Milton and His Solid Senders (Juke Box 503) is released.

February

Due to legal complications, Philo Records becomes Aladdin Records.

March

"Hillbilly Boogie" by the Delmore Brothers (King 527) is released. Big Joe Turner's "Rebecca" (Decca 11001) is released.

April

Jim Bulleit's new Nashville company, Bullet, releases its first singles: "Nashville Jumps" by Cecil Gant (Bullet 250), "Zeb's Mountain Boogie" by Owen Bradley (Bullet 600), and "They Have Gone Away" by the Baxter Quartet (Bullet 100). "The House of Blue Lights" by Ella Mae Morse (Capitol 251) is released.

May

The Ravens' first record, "Honey" (Hub 3030), is released.

June

On the 19th, NBC telecasts the Joe Louis-Billy Conn fight. By the end of the month, Aladdin releases a ringside recording of the "Louis-Conn Knockout Round" (Aladdin 150).

July

On the 2nd, blacks vote for the first time in Mississippi Democratic primaries.

October

Moon Mullican's "New Milk Cow Blues" (King 578) is released.

November

Louis Jordan's "Let the Good Times Roll" (Decca 2374) is released.

1947

January

Sterling Records of New York, a subsidiary of Juke Box, introduces

its new country line with Hank Williams's first record, "Calling You" (Sterling 201). "For singing real country songs Hank Williams is a favorite wherever he is heard," says an advertisement in the January 18 *Billboard*.

March

"That's All Right" by Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup (Victor 20-2205) is released.

April

"I Sold My Heart to the Junk Man" by Etta Jones and the J. C. Heard Band (Victor 20-2231) is released. St. Louis Jimmy's "Goin' Down Slow" (Bullet 270) is released. Abbott and Costello's two-part recording of "Who's on First?" (Enterprise 501) is released. On the 11th, Jackie Robinson of the Brooklyn Dodgers becomes the first black to play on a major-league baseball team.

June

Hank Williams's first MGM record, "Move It on Over" (MGM 10033), is released. The Trenier Twins' first record, "Buzz, Buzz, Buzz" (Mercury 8045), is released. On the 13th, the Supreme Court in Atlanta revokes the national charter of the Ku Klux Klan.

July

Flying-saucer hysteria overtakes America. "During the past fortnight," notes the July 8 London *Times*, "reports that dish-like objects, nicknamed 'flying saucers,' have been seen traveling through the air at great speed . . . have come from the United States and Canada." Both *Time* and *Newsweek* report on the phenomenon in their issues of the 14th. By the end of the month, from Little Rock, Arkansas, comes "Flying Saucers" by a country duo called Buddy and Claude (President 10).

September

Roy Brown's "Good Rockin' Tonight" (DeLuxe 1093) is released.

October

On the 10th, the first bodies of the American dead of World War Two arrive in the United States. During the third week of the month, Hank Williams's "Move It on Over" becomes his first record to hit the country charts.

November

On the 4th, Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* opens in New York.

December

Blues singer Andrew Tibbs's "Bilbo Is Dead" (Aristocrat 1101) is released, lamenting the loss of Mississippi Democratic Senator-elect Theodore G. Bilbo, who

died on August 31. (Congress had opposed Bilbo's seating on the grounds that he had won his election through a campaign based on "white supremacy.")

1948

January

Morris Ballen purchases the Gotham label of Philadelphia.

February

"Television" by the Zeke Manners Band (Victor 20-2730) is released, commenting on that new appliance's effect on the quality of life. Wynonie Harris's "Good Rockin' Tonight" (King 4210) is released.

March

Nat King Cole's "Nature Boy" (Capitol 15054) is released.

April

Lionel Hampton's restyling of the 1931 Duke Ellington piece "Rockin' in Rhythm" (Decca 24415) is released. *Billboard* notes its "wild sax solos" and its "heavy handed rhythm."

May

Brownie McGhee's R&B tribute to Jackie Robinson of the Brooklyn Dodgers and Larry Dobey of the Cleveland Indians, "Robbie-Dobie Boogie" (Savoy 5550), is released. "It Jumps, It's Made, It Rocks, It Rolls," proclaims the Savoy advertisement in the May 22 issue of *Billboard*.

June

During the second week of the month, Wynonie Harris's "Good Rockin Tonight" hits Number 1 on the R&B charts. On the 21st, at its dealers' convention in Atlantic City, Columbia introduces its new 33 1/3-rpm microgroove discs. The company's initial LP catalogue, made public the following week, consists mostly of classical works, with *The Voice of Frank Sinatra* (CL 6001) as a notable exception.

July

Wild Bill Moore's "We're Gonna Rock" (Savoy 666) is released. In its review on the 17th, *Billboard* declares that "Paul Williams' baritone sax is featured, but not to advantage as he honks, shrieks and makes unmusical noises." Joe Lutcher's "Rockin Boogie" (Specialty 303) is released. Bill Haley receives his first notice from the press. His record "Four Leaf Clover Blues" (Cowboy 1201) is described by *Billboard* as "dull, draggy . . . uninspired." The Orioles' first record, "It's Too Soon to Know" (It's a Natural 5000), is released.

August

Capitol becomes the first record company to use magnetic tape. On the 16th, Babe Ruth dies at Memorial Hospital in New York.

October

Amos Milburn's "Chicken Shack Boogie" (Aladdin 3014) is released. "Shout 'n' Rock" by the Billy Williams Orchestra (Atlantic 852) is released.

November

Decca announces the formation of its Coral subsidiary. Memphis Slim's "Rockin' the House" (Miracle 103) is released.

December

As Christmas week begins, Amos Milburn's "Chicken Shack Boogie" hits Number 1 on the R&B charts.

1949

January

Hank Williams's "Lovesick Blues" (MGM 10352) is released. In its review of the following month, *Billboard* praises "Hank's razz-mah-tazz approach." Hattie Noel's "Rockin Jenny Jones" (MGM 10355) is released. Johnny Otis's "Barrel House Boogie" (Excelsior 536), a follow-up to his "Good Boogdi Googi" (Excelsior 518), is released. *Billboard* declares it to be "One of the loudest records ever made." Roy Brown's "Rockin at Midnight" (DeLuxe 3212) is released.

February

The Hucklebuck dance craze flourishes. Paul Williams's original recording of "The Hucklebuck" (Savoy 683), rising to Number 1 on the R&B charts, is soon covered by Tommy Dorsey (RCA-Victor 3427) and Frank Sinatra (Columbia 38466), among others.

March

RCA-Victor introduces 45-rpm records. As Hank Williams's "Lovesick Blues" ascends the country charts, Rex Griffin's 1937 Decca version of the song is reissued (Coral 64007).

May

Wild Bill Moore's "Rock and Roll" (Modern 20-674) is released. Hank Williams's "Lovesick Blues" hits Number 1 on the country charts during the last week of the month, inspiring an R&B cover version by Eddie Crosby (Decca 46168).

June

Bill Nettles's "Hadacol Boogie" (Mercury 6190), the first of many songs celebrating the wonders of Dudley J. LeBlanc's patent elixer,

is released. Beginning with its June 1 issue, *Billboard* forsakes the terms "hillbilly" and "race" for "country and western" and "rhythm and blues."

July

Jimmy Preston's "Rock the Joint" (Gotham 188) is released.

August

Wynonie Harris's "All She Wants to Do Is Rock" (King 4304) is released. The first issue of *Country Song Roundup* is published by the Charlton company of Derby, Connecticut.

September

The RKO movie *I Married a Communist* is released.

October

Ruth Brown's slow "Rocking Blues" (Atlantic 887) is released.

December

Fats Domino's first record, "The Fat Man" (Imperial 508) is released. Tiny Grimes's "Rock the House" (Atlantic 894) is released.

1950

January

Randy Wood's Dot Records of Gallatin, Tennessee, releases its first record, "Boogie Beat Rag" by the Tennessee Drifters (Dot 1001). Macy Lela Henry of Houston inaugurates her Macy's Records company with Lester Williams's "Wintertime Blues" (Macy's 5000). Johnny Lee Wills's "Rag Mop" (Bullet 696), the most-covered song of the year, is released. In ensuring weeks, versions follow by the Ames Brothers (Coral 60140), Ralph Flanagan (RCA-Victor 3212), Lionel Hampton (Decca 24855), Chuck Merrill (Bullet 322), and the one and only Doc Sausage (Regal 3251). Roy Brown's two-part "Butcher Pete" (DeLuxe 1504) is released. "Not for airplay," cautions *Billboard*. Connie Jordan's "I'm Gonna Rock" (Coral 65022) is released. *Billboard* opines that it "doesn't have the real gone spirit." On the last day of the month, President Truman authorizes the production of the H-bomb.

February

Pee Wee Crayton's "Rockin' the Blues" (Modern 20-732) is released.

March

"Rock with It" by Johnny Moore's Three Blazers (RCA-Victor 50-0007) is released. "Birmingham Bounce" by Hardrock Gunter and the Pebbles (Bama 104) is released. It is promptly covered by

R&B singers Amos Milburn (Aladdin 3058) and Chuck Merrill (MGM 10695), and by country singers Pee Wee King (RCA-Victor 21-0332) and Red Foley (Decca 46234). Intro Records is formed as the C&W subsidiary of Aladdin.

May

Nat King Cole's "Mona Lisa" (Capitol 1010) is released. Hank Wil-liams's wife, Audrey, begins her ill-fated solo recording career with a Hadacol song, "Who Put the Pop in Grandma?" (Decca 6223). Charles Olson, living in Washington, D.C., writes the first of the *Maximus* poems, "I, Maximus of Gloucester, to You." Doc Sausage's "Sau-sage Rock" (Regal 3256) is released.

June

Dudley J. LeBlanc's Hadacol Caravan, featuring Hank Williams, Chico Marx, and others, sets off on its 3,000-mile tour of the South. Willard and Lillian McMurry start the Trumpet label in Jackson, Mississippi. On the 27th, Truman orders the Air Force and Navy into Korea.

July

Harry Choates, right behind Truman, warns "Korea, Here We Come" (Macy's 141). New York radio personality Symphony Sid begins broadcasting his Saturday midnight-to-dawn WJZ program from Birdland. Pee Wee Barnum's "Rocking Rhythm" (Imperial 5097) is released.

September

Modern Records forms the RPM label. Piano Red's "Rockin' with Red" (RCA-Victor 50-0099) is released. As anti-communism surges, Hank Williams, doing business as Luke the Drifter, reprimands Stalin with "No, No, Joe" (MGM 10806). His feelings are echoed by Arthur "Guitar Boogie" Smith's "Mr. Stalin, You're Eating Too High on the Hog" (MGM 10829).

November

Arkie Shibley's "Hot Rod Race" (Gilt Edge 5015) is released. Nat King Cole's "Frosty the Snowman" (Capitol 1203) is released. Johnny Otis's "Rocking Blues" (Savoy 766) is released.

December

The Dominoes' first record, "Do Something for Me" (Federal 12001) is released. "Payola to disk jockeys is at an all-time peak," declares *Billboard* in its issue of the 23rd. Wil-liam Faulkner accepts the Nobel Prize for Literature.

1951

January

Piney Brown's "How about Rocking with Me" (Apollo 423) is released. The first great rock-'n'-roll album, *Party after Hours* (Aladdin 33-703) is released. The 10-inch LP includes recordings by Amos Milburn, Wynonie Harris, and others.

February

The Clovers sign with Atlantic. On the 4th, Cecil Gant dies at Hubbard Hospital in Nashville. Specialty Records begins issuing 45-rpm singles. Aladdin signs the Five Keys of Newport, Virginia. On the 28th, the preliminary report of Senator Estes Kefauver's investigation into organized crime is delivered. The outstanding moment of the hearings comes when Senator Charles Toby asks Virginia Hill, "Young lady, what makes you the favorite of the underworld?" and Virginia Hill answers, "Senator, I'm the best goddamned cocksucker in the world."

March

"Rockin'" by the Robins (Modern 20-807) is released. "Let's Rock a While" by Amos Milburn (Aladdin 3080) is released. "Rockin' after Hours" by Chuck Norris (Aladdin 3081) is released.

April

Joe Turner signs a three-year contract with Atlantic Records. "Rocket '88'" by Jackie Brenston and His Delta Cats (Chess 1458) is released. Capitol introduces its "optional-center" 45-rpm singles. Little Son Jackson's "Rockin' and Rollin'" (Imperial 5113) is released.

May

The Dominoes' "Sixty-Minute Man" (Federal 12022) hits the R&B charts. Bob Lamm's "That's When Your Heartaches Begin" (Dot 1050) is released. Columbia revives the Okeh label. Among the first acts signed to Okeh are the Treniers.

June

On the 28th, "Amos 'n' Andy" (CBS) is first telecast.

July

Peppermint Harris's "I Got Loaded" (Aladdin 3097) is released. Harmonica Frank's "Swamp Root" (Chess 1473) is released. On the 27th, the Korean War ends.

August

The Dominoes' "Sixty-Minute Man" crosses over to the pop charts. Alan Freed begins broadcasting his "Moondog Rock and Roll Party" over WJW in Cleve-

land, Ohio. Ernie Young of Nashville starts the Nashboro label.

October

Hank Williams signs a five-year movie deal with MGM. On the 26th, Rocky Marciano beats Joe Louis in eight rounds at Madison Square Garden in New York.

December

Little Richard's first record, "Taxi Blues" (RCA-Victor 47-4392) is released.

1952

January

H-Bomb Ferguson's "Good Lovin'" (Savoy 830) is released. Dana Andrews is featured in the ZIV radio drama, "I Was a Communist for the F.B.I." The TV Dinner is introduced by C. A. Swanson & Son of Omaha, Nebraska. Its entree is turkey, and it sells for $1.09.

March

The Royals' first record, "Every Beat of My Heart" (Federal 12064) is released.

April

Bill Haley's version of "Rock the Joint" (Essex 303) is released.

May

Sheriff Tex Davis adds a "Prayer Time" to his nightly radio show on WLOW in Norfolk, Virginia.

June

"Rock, Rock, Rock" by Willis "Gator Tail" Jackson (Atlantic 967) is released. As Eisenhower and Stevenson campaign against each other, Louis Jordan's "Jordan for President" (Decca 28225) is released.

July

Louis Prima's version of "One Mint Julep" (Columbia 39823) is released. The Onyx Publishing Company, a subsidiary of the Charlton organization of Derby, Connecticut, begins the publication of *Rhythm and Blues* magazine. Hank Williams leaves the cast of the WSM "Grand Ole Opry."

August

The Treniers' "Rockin' on Sunday Night" (Okeh 6904) is released.

September

"Really Real" by Viola Watkins & Otis Blackwell (Jubilee 5095) is released. On the 23rd, Rocky Marciano wins the world heavyweight title with a 13th-round knockout against Jersey Joe Walcott in Philadelphia. Excello Records is formed as a subsidiary of Nashboro.

October

"Rock Me All Night Long" by the Ravens (Mercury 8291) is released. Ray Charles's first Atlantic record, "Roll with My Baby" (Atlantic 976) is released. Okeh Records signs Big Maybelle Smith. RCA-Victor introduces Orthophonic Sound and EP albums. Luke McDaniels's "Whoa, Boy!" (Trumpet 184) is released. "We're Gonna Rock This Joint" by the Jackson Brothers Orchestra (RCA-Victor 20-5004) is released. On the 20th, Hank Williams marries Miss Billie Jones of Bossier City, Louisiana, on the stage of the New Orleans Municipal Auditorium. Ticket prices range from $1 to $2.80, and more than 14,000 people attend.

November

Sam Phillips's Sun Records of Memphis releases its first single, "Blues in My Condition" by Jackie Boy and Little Walter (Sun 174). The first hydrogen device is exploded at Eniwetok Atoll in the Pacific. Hank Williams's "I'll Never Get Out of This World Alive" (MGM 11366) is released. Amos Milburn's "Rock, Rock, Rock" (Aladdin 3159) is released.

December

Lester Bihari of RPM starts the Meteor label in Memphis. Rockin' Records is formed in Los Angeles. Coral Records revives the Brunswick label.

1953

January

In the first hours of the new year, near Oak Hill, West Virginia, twenty-nine-year-old Hank Williams dies in the back seat of a car en route to Canton, Ohio. His funeral service, held in Montgomery, Alabama, on the 4th, is the largest in the history of that city. "They came from everywhere," reports the Montgomery *Advertiser* the next day, "dressed in their Sunday best, babies in their arms, hobbling on crutches and canes, Negroes, Jews, Catholics, Protestants, small children, and wrinkled faced old men and women. Some brought their lunch . . . " "The Death of Hank Williams" by Jack Cardell (King 1172), issued at mid-month, is the first of the Hank Williams "tribute" records. It is soon followed by "Hank Williams Will Live Forever" by Johnnie and Jack (RCA-Victor 47-5164), "Tribute to Hank Williams" by Joe Rumore with J. T. Adams and the Men of Texas (Republic 100), "In Memory of Hank Williams" by Arthur Smith

(MGM 11433), "The Life of Hank Williams" by Hawkshaw Hawkins (King 1174), "The Death of Hank Williams" by Jimmie Logsdon (Decca 28584), "That Heaven Bound Train" by Johnny Ryon (Coral 60148), and "The Last Letter" by Jimmy Swan (MGM 11450). By the end of the month, a legal battle over Hank Williams's estate breaks out among Audrey Williams, Billie Jones Williams, and the late singer's mother, Mrs. W. W. Stone of Montgomery. "Real Rock Drive" by Bill Haley and Haley's Comets (Essex 310) is released. "You're a Heartbreaker" by Jimmie Heap (Capitol 2294) is released.

February

"Hound Dog" by Willie Mae Thornton (Peacock 1612) is released.

March

On the 5th, Joseph Stalin dies. This event is celebrated by Buddy Hawk's "The Death of Joe Stalin (Good Riddance)" (Atlantic 7074) and Ray Anderson's "Stalin Kicked the Bucket" (Kentucky 573). Frank Sinatra signs with Capitol. Rufus Thomas's "Bear Cat" (Sun 181), a comical response to Willie Mae Thornton's "Hound Dog," is released. *Billboard* declares it to be "the fastest answer song yet to hit the market." *Abbott and Costello Go to Mars* is released by Universal.

April

"Crazy, Man, Crazy" by Bill Haley and Haley's Comets (Essex 321) is released. On the 25th, a Superior Court judge in Hollywood appoints Mrs. Mary Stein and Mrs. Adelyn Stoller, the mothers of the twenty-year-old authors of "Hound Dog" —Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller— to be their sons' legal guardians.

May

"THE ONE AND ONLY! AUDREY (Mrs. Hank) WILLIAMS ★ THE GIRL FOR WHOM THE LATE, GREAT HANK WILLIAMS WROTE HIS FAMOUS SONGS!" is, according to an advertisement in the May 2 *Billboard,* "Now available as a single or with her own all-star show for auditoriums, parks, fairs, theatres, T.V." Bill Haley's "Crazy, Man, Crazy" hits the pop charts during the second week of the month. Clyde McPhatter quits as the lead singer of the Dominoes, forms the Drifters, and signs with Atlantic.

June

Between middleweight titles, Sugar Ray Robinson makes his recording debut with "Knock Him Down, Whiskey" (King 4641).

Lucky Joe Almond's "Rock Me" (Trumpet 199) is released.

August

The Charms' first record, "Heaven Only Knows" (Rockin' 516), is released. The Spaniels' first record, "Baby, It's You" (Chance 1141), is released. The Flairs sign with Flair Records. Country singer Eddy Arnold and Col. Tom Parker, his manager since 1945, end their association. Parker's new protégé is Tommy Sands, recently signed to RCA-Victor as a country singer.

September

Clyde McPhatter and the Drifters' first record, "Money Honey" (Atlantic 1006), is released. Webb Pierce's "There Stands the Glass" (Decca 28834) is released. "Kinsey's Book" by Talkin' Charlie Aldrich (Intro 6083) is released, commenting on the effects of the recently published *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female.*

October

The formation of Epic Records ("with Radial Sound") is announced. Capitol introduces its "Special Hi-Fi" line of classical albums. The Moonglows, the Cleveland group managed by Alan Freed, are signed to Chance Records. Otis Blackwell's "Daddy Rollin' Stone" (Jay-Dee 784) is released. Johnny Otis's "Rock Me Baby" (Peacock 1625) is released. Bobby Blue Bland's "No Blow, No Show" (Duke 115) is released. Sam Butera's "Easy Rocking" (RCA-Victor 20-5469) is released. Dean Martin's "That's Amore" (Capitol 2589) is released. Betty Hutton's "Hot Dog! That Made Him Mad" (Capitol 2608) is released. Illinois Jacquet's "Sittin' and Rockin'" (Clef 89084) is released.

November

Louis Jordan announces that he will sign with Aladdin when his Decca contract expires on New Year's Day. Louis Prima's Jubilee record, "Man, Dig That Crazy Chick" (Jubilee 6054), is released. "Mystery Train" by Little Junior's Blue Flames (Sun 192) is released. "Raid on the After Hour Joint" by Jimmie Coe and His Gay Cats of Rhythm (States 129) is released.

December

As 3-D movies such as *It Came from Outer Space* and *House of Wax* captivate our noble democracy, "My Baby's 3-D" by Billy Ward and the Dominoes (Federal 12162) is released.

1954

January

On the 4th, a few days before his nineteenth birthday, Elvis Presley

pays four dollars to make an acetate-disc record at Sam Phillips's Memphis Recording Service. On the 21st, the first atomic-powered submarine, the *Nautilus,* is launched at Groton, Connecticut.

February

"X" Records is formed by RCA. Hickory Records is founded in Nashville. "Work with Me, Annie" by the Royals (Federal 12169) is released. "Gee" by the Crows (Rama 5) is released. "I'm Your Hoochie Koochie Man" by Muddy Waters (Chess 1560) is released.

April

On the 5th, Major Donald Kehoe of the U.S. Marine Corps appears on "The Betty White Show" (NBC) and accuses the Air Force of a flying-saucer cover-up. "Within the next few months," he predicts, "the whole flying-saucer story will break open, with an announcement probably from the White House." Joe Turner's "Shake, Rattle and Roll" (Atlantic 1026) is released. The Spark label of Los Angeles, owned in part by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, releases its first single, "Farewell" by Willie and Ruth (Spark 101). Atlantic Records introduces the Cat label. On the 22nd, Senator Joseph McCarthy begins his televised hearings into purported Communist influences in the U.S. Army. Savoy Records signs Nappy Brown, formerly the lead singer with Selah Jubilee Singers. "Sh-Boom" by the Chords (Cat 104) is released.

May

On the 1st, at the Newark Armory, Alan Freed holds his first East Coast dance concert. The show's acts—the Clovers, Muddy Waters, Charles Brown, Sam Butera, Arnett Cobb, and others—cost Freed less than $3,500, but draw a crowd of more than 10,000 people, who pay two dollars each to get in. "(We're Gonna) Rock Around the Clock" by Bill Haley and His Comets (Decca 29124) is released. On the 17th, Clyde McPhatter is drafted into the Army. Saul Bihari's Modern and RPM labels, Joe Bihari's Flair, and Jules Bihari's Crown consolidate their facilities into a new recording, manufacturing, and office complex in Culver City. RCA-Victor introduces its CT-100 Compatible Color TV, which sells for $1,000. On the 17th, the U.S. Supreme Court rules unanimously that racial segregation in public schools is unconstitutional. Howlin' Wolf's "Rockin' Daddy" (Chess 1566) is released. Art Carney's "Song of the Sewer" (Columbia 40242) is released. On the 29th, *Billboard* writer Bob Rolontz observes in an editorial, "The youth movement that swept pop records only a few years ago appears to

have dissipated itself during 1953 and especially during 1954." George Jones's "Play It Cool, Man, Play It Cool" (Starday 146) is released. Dallas Frazier's "Space Command" (Capitol 2813) is released. "Riot in Cell Block No. 9" by the Robins (Spark 103) is released, while Don Siegel's *Riot in Cell Block 11,* the movie that inspired it, is still showing in neighborhood theatres. "Sexy Ways" by the Midnighters (Federal 12185) is released.

June

Bill Haley's version of "Shake, Rattle and Roll" (Decca 29204) is released.

July

Mercury becomes the first company to send out 45-rpm D.J. singles, rather than 78s, to radio stations and reviewers. Harmonica Frank's "Rockin' Chair Daddy" (Sun 205) is released. On the 17th and 18th, the Newport Festival of American Jazz is held. Lucky Joe Almond's "Gonna Roll and Rock" (Trumpet 221) is released. "Rock, Roll, Ball and Wail" by Big Dave and His Orchestra (Capitol 2884) is released. Elvis Presley's first record, "That's All Right" (Sun 209), is released at the end of the month.

August

"Annie Had a Baby" by the Midnighters (Federal 12195) is released. Alan Freed begins broadcasting nightly over WINS in New York. The New York *Daily Mirror* claims that the Mafia is taking over the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers. Joe Turner and Ruth Brown are filmed for Willie Bryant's "Showtime at the Apollo" TV program. Ed Mesner opens an Aladdin Records office in New York. Jesse Stone is hired to run the company's Lamp subsidiary. "Earth Angel" by the Penguins (DooTone 348) is released. "Blue Moon of Kentucky," the flip side of Elvis Presley's first record, appears on the Memphis C&W chart for the week ending August 18.

September

"Hearts of Stone" by the Charms (DeLuxe 6062) is released.

October

Muddy Waters's "I'm Ready" (Chess 1579) is released. On the night of the 16th, Elvis Presley performs on the KWKH "Louisiana Hayride" in Shreveport. Rock-Ola premieres its 120-selection jukebox.

November

Arthur Gunter's "Baby, Let's Play House" (Excello 2047) is released. "Open Up the Doghouse (Two Cats Are Comin' In)" by Dean

Martin and Nat King Cole (Capitol 2985) is released. Jack Clement's "I Can't Say Nothin' at All" (Sheraton 1002) is released. "Ko Ko Mo" by Gene and Eunice (Combo 64) is released. Rosemary Clooney's "Mambo Italiano" (Columbia 40361) is banned by ABC, which claims that the record does not meet "standards of good taste."

December

Marty Robbins's version of "That's All Right" (Columbia 21351) is released. Neshui Ertegun joins his brother, Ahmet, at Atlantic Records. Malcolm Yelvington's "Drinkin' Wine Spo-Dee-O-Dee" (Sun 211) is released. On Christmas Eve, twenty-five-year-old Johnny Ace blows his brains out.

1955

January

Johnny Ace's "Pledging My Love" (Duke 136) is released, and is recommended by *Billboard* as "This Week's Best Buy." Varetta Dillard's "tribute" record, "Johnny Has Gone" (Savoy 1153), is first, followed by Johnny Moore's Blazers' "Why, Johnny, Why" c/w Frankie Irwin's "Johnny Ace's Last Letter" (Hollywood 1031), the Five Wings' "Johnny Has Gone" (King 4778), The Rovers' "Salute to Johnny Ace" (Music City 780), Johnny Fuller's "Johnny Ace's Last Letter" (Aladdin 3278), and "In Memory" by Marie Adams and the Johnny Otis Orchestra (Peacock 1649).

February

Anisteen Allen's "Fujiyama Mama" (Capitol 3048) is released. Stormy Herman's "Trouble Blues" (Doo-Tone 358) is released. New York City jukeboxes shift from nickel to dime action.

March

Bo Diddley's first record, "Bo Diddley" (Checker 814), is released. Charlie Feathers's "Peepin Eyes" (Flip 503) is released. *Blackboard Jungle* is released. Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* questions whether the movie is "a desirable stimulant to spread before the young." Clare Booth Luce, ambassador to France, demands that it be withdrawn as an entry at the Venice Film Festival. The Shelby County Board of Censors bans it from being shown in Memphis. Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock," the film's theme song, is reissued by Decca.

April

Elvis Presley's version of "Baby, Let's Play House" (Sun 217) is released.

July

"Maybelline" by Chuck Berry (Chess 1604) is released.

August

Atco Records is formed as a subsidiary of Atlantic. George Jones's "Why, Baby, Why" (Starday 202) is released. "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" by Big Maybelle (Okeh 7060) is released.

September

Elvis Presley's last Sun record, "Mystery Train" (Sun 223), is released.

October

On the 30th, Ezra Pound turns seventy in the nuthouse.

November

On the 26th, Elvis Presley, now under the general management of Col. Tom Parker, signs a three-year-plus-options contract in New York with RCA-Victor. Sam Phillips is paid close to $40,000 to relinquish his contract with Elvis (which has another year to run) along with all of Presley's Sun recordings. "Mystery Train" is reissued (RCA-Victor 6357), and Presley's first RCA session is scheduled for January 5 in Nashville.

December

Fuck it, Doc Sausage figures.

Archaeologia Rockola

The discographies that follow have been arranged according to release dates. This has not been an easy task. The less respectable tributaries of popular music were for the most part ignored when these records were made. They were not, as they are today, thought to be an important part of that thing called culture. For better or for worse, rock 'n' roll was not something to be taken seriously. No one chronicled it, no one wrote about it, no one thought of preserving it. To date these records, trade weeklies and record company catalogues of the period, along with existing discographies—and of course the records themselves had to be exhaustively examined. Lost were uncounted days that could have been spent at the track. But I think this sort of discography is more enlightening, and certainly more digestible, than that composed of recording dates and matrix numbers, blank spaces and question marks. It is only when a record — or a book, a movie, a poem, a new brand of deodorant, whatever — is put on the cultural block that it takes on meaning for anyone beyond its maker. Knowing when it was put on the block helps to place it in historical context.

Most of these discographies cover their subjects' recording careers from their beginnings to the end of 1956 — if they lasted that long. (Nineteen fifty-six has been chosen as the cut-off year because rock 'n' roll had by then, depending on how one looks at it, either subsumed or been subsumed by the mainstream.) Four exceptions have been made: Nat King Cole and Louis Prima, for reasons given in the introductory notes to their dis-

cographies, and Jay Hawkins and Wanda Jackson, who came along later than the rest, and whose discographies have been accordingly extended here by a year. All pertinent albums released up to and including 1958 have been listed. In a seizure of common sense, I have omitted a very few records which are not known beyond doubt to exist. (There is purported to be a 1949 Bill Haley record on the Center label, for instance; but I do not know anyone who has ever seen a copy of it.)

Many of these records are rare. Much of this music, however, is reissued periodically by companies great and small (but mostly small) in America, England, Europe, and Japan. These reissue albums tend to become available and to go out of print with equal suddenness. A rundown of what's more or less available in CD and LP form is given in the section "Old Noise, New Plastic."

Johnny Ace

DUKE 102 (May 1952)
My Song
Follow the Rule
DUKE 107 (December 1952)
Cross My Heart
Angel
DUKE 112 (June 1953)
The Clock
Aces Wild
DUKE 118 (November 1953)
Saving My Love for You
Yes Baby
DUKE 128 (May 1954)
Please Forgive Me
You've Been Gone So Long
DUKE 132 (September 1954)
Never Let Me Go
Burley Cutie
DUKE 136 (January 1955)
Pledging My Love
No Money
DUKE 144 (June 1955)
How Can You Be So Mean Anymore
DUKE 148 (December 1955)
So Lonely
I'm Crazy Baby
DUKE 154 (July 1956)
Still Love You So
Don't You Know

Albums

DUKE 70 (1955)
Memorial Album (10-inch LP)
DUKE 71 (1956)
Memorial Album (12-inch LP)
Duke also issued two ACE 45-rpm EPs, Nos. 80 and 81, in 1955

Jackie Brenston

This listing includes only those

records on which Jackie Brenston sang. For details of those recordings on which Brenston played saxophone, see the "Ike Turner Discography, Part 1: You're Driving Me Insane, 1951–1959" in *Blues Unlimited* No. 140 (London, 1981).

Jackie Brenston and His Delta Cats
CHESS 1458 (April 1951)
Rocket "88"
Come Back Where You Belong
CHESS 1469 (June 1951)
My Real Gone Rocket
Tuckered Out
CHESS 1472 (July 1951)
Independent Woman
Juiced

Jackie Brenston and Edna McCraney
CHESS 1496 (January 1952)
Hi Ho Baby
Leo the Louse

Jackie Brenston and His Delta Cats
CHESS 1532 (June 1953)
Starvation
Blues Got Me Again

Jackie Brenston with Ike Turner's Kings of Rhythm
FEDERAL 12283 (October 1956)
What Can It Be
Gonna Wait for My Chance
FEDERAL 12291 (December 1956)
The Mistreater
Much Later

Charles Brown

Johnny Moore's Three Blazers
PREMIER 104 (1944)
Tell Me You'll Wait for Me
Melancholy Madeline [vocal by Frankie Laine]
ATLAS 107 (May 1945)
Fugue in C Major
Melancholy Madeline [reissue of Premier 104]
ATLAS 110 (May 1945)
Escapade
Tell Me You'll Wait for Me [reissue of Premier 104]
EXCLUSIVE 205 (July 1945)
You Taught Me to Love (but Not to Forget)
Johnny's Boogie
EXCLUSIVE 205 (September 1945)
End o' War Blues
You Taught Me to Love (but Not to Forget)
EXCLUSIVE 209 (November 1945)
Blues at Sunrise [vocal: Ivory Joe Hunter]
You Taught Me to Love [reissue of Exclusive 205]
PHILO 111 (December 1945)
Baby, Don't You Cry
Blazer's Boogie
PHILO 112 (January 1946)
Drifting Blues
Groovy
MODERN 131 (January 1946)
Traveling Blues
It's the Talk of the Town

MODERN 133 (February 1946)
What Do You Know about Love?
[reverse: Hadda Brooks]
MODERN 134 (February 1946)
Warsaw Concerto I
Warsaw Concerto II
ATLAS 122 (February 1946) [reissue of Premier 104]
Tell Me You'll Wait for Me
Melancholy Madeline [vocal: Frankie Laine]
MODERN 135 (March 1946)
I'll Get Along Somehow
You Are My First Love
ATLAS 124 (March 1946)
Maureen [vocal: Frankie Laine]
Nightfall
EXCLUSIVE 214 (March 1946)
C.O.D.
There Is No Greater Love
ALADDIN 111 (March 1946) [reissue of Philo 111]
Baby, Don't You Cry
Blazer's Boogie
ALADDIN 112 (March 1946) [reissue of Philo 112]
Drifting Blues
Groovy
ALADDIN 129 (April 1946)
Race-Track Blues
You Are My First Love
ALADDIN 130 (April 1946)
Rocks in My Bed
Till the Real Thing Comes Along
EXCLUSIVE 221 (June 1946)
It Ain't Gonna Be Like That
With My Heart in My Hand
MODERN 139 (June 1946)
How Deep Is the Ocean
You Showed Me the Way
EXCLUSIVE 224 (July 1946)
Googie's Boogie
My Silent Love
EXCLUSIVE 226 (August 1946)
I Want You, I Need You
Hard Track
MODERN 142 (August 1946)
You Won't Let Me Go
[reverse: Will Rowland]
MODERN 143 (September 1946)
You Left Me Forsaken
So Long
EXCLUSIVE 233 (November 1946)
Sunny Road
Be Fair with Me
EXCLUSIVE 234 (November 1946)
(Was I to Blame for) Falling In Love with You
Bobby Sox Blues

Note: the following three records were issued together as an album (EX-1002).

EXCLUSIVE 703 (January 1947)
St. Louis Blues
Gloria
EXCLUSIVE 704 (January 1947)
I Wouldn't Mind
Way Over There by the Cherry Tree
EXCLUSIVE 705 (January 1947)
B Sharp, You'll See
Now That You're Gone
ALADDIN 183 (March 1947) [reissue of Aladdin 112/130]
Drifting Blues
Groovy
ALADDIN 184 (April 1947)

[reissue of Aladdin 111/129]
Baby, Don't You Cry
You Are My First Love
EXCLUSIVE 240 (April 1947)
New Orleans Blues
I Surrender Dear
MODERN 151 (May 1947)
Sail On Blues
Blue Because of You
EXCLUSIVE 243 (May 1947)
Better Watch What You Do
I Love to Make Love to You
EXCLUSIVE 246 (June 1947)
I Cried for You
Pasadena
MODERN 152 (July 1947)
Make-Believe Land
[reverse: Happy Johnson]
EXCLUSIVE 249 (August 1947)
Moonrise
Juke Box Lil
MODERN 154 (September 1947)
It Had to Be You
If You Should Ever Leave Me
EXCLUSIVE 251 (October 1947)
Changeable Woman Blues
Why Is Love Like That?
EXCLUSIVE 254 (November 1947)
Merry Christmas Baby
Lost in the Night
EXCLUSIVE 257 (December 1948)
Money's Getting Cheaper
It's Over
EXCLUSIVE 259 (January 1948)
Scratch Sheet
Soothe Me
EXCLUSIVE 261 (February 1948)
Cold in Here
Teresa
EXCLUSIVE 265 (March 1948)
Groovy Moovie Blues
Free Lancin' Again
EXCLUSIVE 268 (March 1948)
I'm So Happy I Could Cry
Don't Get Salty, Sugar
EXCLUSIVE 272 (April 1948)
Friendless Blues
You Better Change Your Way of Lovin'
EXCLUSIVE 40X (May 1948)
Jilted Blues
Any Old Place with Me
MODERN 599 (May 1948)
More Than You Know
[reverse: Hadda Brooks]
EXCLUSIVE 47X (June 1948)
I'm Looking for Love
Huggin' Bug
EXCLUSIVE 53X (September 1948)
Lonesome Blues
Walkin' in Circles
EXCLUSIVE 63X (November 1948) [reissue of Exclusive 254]
Merry Christmas Baby
Lost in the Night

The Charles Brown Trio
ALADDIN 3020 (January 1949)
Get Yourself Another Fool
Ooh! Ooh! Sugar!

Johnny Moore's Three Blazers
EXCLUSIVE 69X (January 1949)
Snuff Dippin' Mama
Where Can I Find My Baby?
EXCLUSIVE 86X (March 1949)
Peek-a-Boo
Love Me Tonight

The Charles Brown Trio
ALADDIN 3021 (March 1949)
A Long Time
It's Nothing
ALADDIN 3024 (April 1949)
Trouble Blues
Honey, Keep Your Mind on Me

Charles Brown with Johnny Moore's Three Blazers
EXCLUSIVE 101X (May 1949)
Tomorrow
Tonight I'm Alone
EXCLUSIVE 107X (June 1949)
Groovie Movie Blues
New Orleans Blues
EXCLUSIVE 111X (June 1949)
B. & O. Blues
I Hate Myself
MODERN 689 (July 1949)
When Your Love Has Gone
[reverse: Hadda Brooks]

The Charles Brown Trio
ALADDIN 3030 (August 1949)
In the Evening When the Sun Goes Down
Please Be Kind

Charles Brown and His Smarties
ALADDIN 3039 (November 1949)
Homesick Blues
Let's Have a Ball

Charles Brown with Johnny Moore's Three Blazers
EXCLUSIVE 120X (November 1949)
I Miss You So
So There
MODERN 731 (December 1949) [reissue of Modern 135/133]
I'll Get Along Somehow
What Do You Know about Love?

The Charles Brown Trio
ALADDIN 3044 (January 1950)
Tormented
Did You Ever Love a Woman?

Charles Brown
ALADDIN 3051 (April 1950)
My Baby's Gone
I Wonder When My Baby's Coming Home
EXCLUSIVE 143X (April 1950)
If I Had You
If You Don't, Why Don't Ya
ALADDIN 3060 (May 1950)
Repentance Blues
I've Got That Old Feeling
ALADDIN 3066 (September 1950)
Again
I've Made Up My Mind
ALADDIN 3071 (November 1950)
How High the Moon
Texas Blues
SWING TIME 238 (November 1950) [reissue of Exclusive 254]
Merry Christmas Baby
Lost in the Night
ALADDIN 3076 (January 1951)
Black Night
Once There Lived a Fool
SWING TIME 253 (March 1951) [reissue of Exclusive 240]
New Orleans Blues
I Surrender Dear

ALADDIN 3091 (July 1951)
I'll Always Be in Love with You
The Message
ALADDIN 3092 (September 1951)
Seven Long Days
Don't Fool with My Heart
ALADDIN 3116 (February 1952)
Hard Times
Tender Heart
ALADDIN 3120 (March 1952)
Still Water
My Last Affair
ALADDIN 3138 (June 1952)
Gee
Without Your Love
ALADDIN 3157 (November 1952)
Alley Batting
Rollin' Like a Pebble in the Sand
ALADDIN 3163 (February 1953)
Evening Shadows
Moonrise
ALADDIN 3176 (March 1953)
Take Me
Sunrise
ALADDIN 3191 (August 1953)
Lonesome Feeling
I Lost Everything
ALADDIN 3200 (November 1953)
All My Life
Don't Leave Poor Me
ALADDIN 3209 (December 1953)
Crying' and Driftin' Blues
P.S. I Love You
HOLLYWOOD 1001 (January 1954)
Strange Love
In the Clay
ALADDIN 3220 (January 1954)
Everybody's Got Troubles
I Fool Around with You
HOLLYWOOD 1006 (February 1954)
The Bet I Can
Pleading for Your Love
ALADDIN 3235 (March 1954)
Let's Walk
Cryin' Mercy
ALADDIN 3254 (September 1954)
My Silent Love
Foolish
ALADDIN 3272 (November 1954)
Honey Sipper
By the Bend of the River
HOLLYWOOD 1021 (December 1954) [reissue of Exclusive 254]
Merry Christmas Baby
Lost in the Night
HOLLYWOOD 1021 (December 1954)
Merry Christmas Baby [reissue of Exclusive 254]
[reverse: Lloyd Glenn]
ALADDIN 3284 (February 1955)
Walk with Me
Night After Night
ALADDIN 3290 (July 1955)
Fool's Paradise
Hot Lips and Seven Kisses
ALADDIN 3296 (August 1955)
Trees, Trees
My Heart Is Mended
ALADDIN 3316 (February 1956)
One Heart to One
Please Don't Drive Me Away
ALADDIN 3339 (October 1956)
Soothe Me
I'll Always Be in Love with You
[reissue of Aladdin 3091]

ALADDIN 3342 (November 1956)
Confidential
Trouble Blues [reissue of Aladdin 3024]
ALADDIN 3348 (December 1956)
Merry Christmas Baby
Black Night [reissue of Aladdin 3076]

Albums

EXCLUSIVE 1002 (January 1947) [78-rpm album]
Johnny Moore's 3 Blazers
ALADDIN 702 (June 1952) [10-inch LP]
Mood Music
ALADDIN 809 (1956) [12-inch LP]
Mood Music
SCORE LP 4011 (1958)
Drifting Blues

Roy Brown

In 1948–49 Brown's first eight DeLuxe records were reissued, the initial digits of their catalogue numbers changed to 3 to conform with the label's new numerical system. Those reissues are not included here.

Roy Brown
GOLD STAR 636 (1946)
Deep Sea Diver
By Baby Bye
DeLUXE 1093 (September 1947)
Good Rocking Tonight
Lolly Pop Mama
DeLUXE 1098 (October 1947)
Special Lesson No. 1
Woman's a Wonderful Thing
DeLUXE 1107 (November 1947)
Roy Brown's Boogie
Please Don't Go
DeLUXE 1128 (December 1947)
Mighty Mighty Man
Miss Fanny Brown

Roy Brown and His Mighty-Mighty Men
DeLUXE 1154 (March 1948)
'Long 'Bout Midnight
Whose Hat Is That?
DeLUXE 1166 (June 1948)
All My Love Belongs to You [reverse: not by Brown]
DeLUXE 1189 (September 1948)
Miss Fanny Brown Returns
Roy Brown's Boogie
DeLUXE 1198 (November 1948)
'Fore Day in the Morning
Rainy Weather Blues
DeLUXE 3212 (January 1949)
Rockin' at Midnight
Judgment Day Blues
DeLUXE 3226 (June 1949)
Please Don't Go (Come Back, Baby)
Riding High
DeLUXE 3300 (September 1949)
Boogie at Midnight
The Blues Got Me Again
DeLUXE 3301 (January 1950)
Butcher Pete, Part 1
Butcher Pete, Part 2

DeLUXE 3302 (February 1950)
End of My Journey
I Feel That Young Man's Rhythm
DeLUXE 3304 (April 1950)
Hard Luck Blues
New Rebecca
DeLUXE 3306 (June 1950)
Love Don't Love Nobody
Dreaming Blues
DeLUXE 3308 (August 1950)
Cadillac Baby
'Long About Sundown
DeLUXE 3311 (December 1950)
Teenage Jamboree
Double Crossin' Woman
DeLUXE 3312 (March 1951)
Good Man Blues
Sweet Peach
DeLUXE 3313 (April 1951)
Beautician Blues
Wrong Woman Blues
DeLUXE 3318 (June 1951)
Train Time Blues
Big Town
DeLUXE 3319 (September 1951)
Good Rockin' Man
Bar Room Blues
DeLUXE 3323 (February 1952)
I've Got the Last Laugh Now
Brown Angel

Roy Brown

KING 4602 (January 1953)
Travelin' Man
Hurry Hurry Back Baby
KING 4609 (February 1953)
Grandpa Stole My Baby
Money Can't Buy Love
KING 4627 (March 1953)
Mr. Hound Dog's in Town
Gamblin' Man
KING 4637 (May 1953)
Old Age Boogie, Part 1
Old Age Boogie, Part 2
KING 4654 (September 1953)
Laughing but Crying
Crazy Crazy Woman
KING 4669 (November 1953)
A Fool in Love
Caldonia's Wedding Day
KING 4684 (December 1953)
Midnight Lover Man
Letter from Home
KING 4689 (January 1954)
Lonesome Lover
Everything's All Right
KING 4704 (March 1954)
Trouble at Midnight
Bootleggin' Baby
KING 4715 (May 1954)
This Is My Last Goodbye
Up Jumped the Devil
KING 4722 (June 1954)
Don't Let It Rain
No Love at All
KING 4731 (August 1954)
Ain't It a Shame
My Gal from Kokomo
KING 4743 (October 1954)
Worried Life Blues
Black Diamond
KING 4761 (December 1954)
Fanny Brown Got Married
Queen of Diamonds
KING 4816 (July 1955)
Letter to My Baby
Shake 'Em Up Baby
KING 4834 (October 1955)
My Little Angel Child
She's Gone Too Long

Albums

KING 536 (1956)
Rock 'n' Roll Dance Party (one cut by Brown)
KING 607 (1958)
Battle of the Blues (seven cuts by Brown)
KING 627 (1958)
Battle of the Blues, Vol. 2 (six cuts by Brown)
A 4-rpm Brown EP, *Blues Boogie* (King EP 254), was released in 1958.

The Clovers

RAINBOW 122 (December 1950)
Yes Sir, That's My Baby
When You Come Back to Me
ATLANTIC 934 (April 1951)
Don't You Know I Love You
Skylark
ATLANTIC 944 (August 1951)
Fool, Fool, Fool
Needless
ATLANTIC 963 (February 1952)
One Mint Julep
Middle of the Night
ATLANTIC 969 (May 1952)
Ting-a-Ling
Wonder Where My Baby's Gone
ATLANTIC 977 (September 1952)
I Played the Fool
Hey, Miss Fannie
ATLANTIC 989 (February 1953)
Crawlin'
Yes, It's You
ATLANTIC 1000 (June 1953)
Good Lovin'
Here Goes a Fool
ATLANTIC 1010 (October 1953)
Comin' On
The Feeling Is So Good
ATLANTIC 1022 (February 1954)
Lovey Dovey
Little Mama
ATLANTIC 1035 (June 1954)
You Cash Ain't Nothin' but Trash
I've Got My Eyes on You
ATLANTIC 1046 (October 1954)
I Confess
All Rightie, Oh Sweetie
ATLANTIC 1052 (December 1954)
Blue Velvet
If You Love Me
ATLANTIC 1060 (May 1955)
Love Bug
In the Morning Time
ATLANTIC 1073 (August 1955)
Nip Sip
If I Could Be Loved by You
ATLANTIC 1083 (January 1956)
Devil or Angel
Hey, Baby Doll
ATLANTIC 1094 (May 1956)
Love, Love, Love
Your Tender Lips
ATLANTIC 1107 (August 1956)
From the Bottom of My Heart
Bring Me Love
ATLANTIC 1118 (November 1956)
Baby, Baby, Oh My Darling
A Lonely Fool

Albums

ATLANTIC 1248 (November 1956)
The Clovers
ATLANTIC 8001 (1957)
The Greatest Rock & Roll (one cut by the Clovers)
ATLANTIC 8009 (1957)
The Clovers
ATLANTIC 8010 (1957)
Rock & Roll Forever (two cuts by the Clovers)
Atlantic also issued two Clovers 45-rpm EPs, No. 504 (1953) and No. 537 (1954). Both were called *The Clovers Sing.*

Nat King Cole

The recordings Cole made in 1936, before he began to sing, are not included here. And, while he continued to record prolifically after 1948, this listing ends with "Nature Boy," his immense hit of that year, for by then Cole's records had little relevance to rock 'n' roll.

The King Cole Swingsters
DAVIS & SCHWEGLER 108 (1939)
There's No Anesthetic for Love
DAVIS & SCHWEGLER 109 (1939)
Dixie Jamboree
DAVIS & SCHWEGLER 110 (1939)
Ta-De-Ah
DAVIS & SCHWEGLER 111 (1939)
Riffin' at the Barbecue

Nat Cole
AMMOR 108 (March 1940)
If Like to Riff
On the Sunny Side of the Street
AMMOR 109 (April 1940)
Black Spider Stomp
By the River Sainte Marie

King Cole
VARSITY 8340 (July 1940) [reissue of Ammor 108]
I Like to Riff
On the Sunny Side of the Street

The King Cole Trio
DECCA 8520 (March 1941)
Sweet Lorraine
This Side Up
DECCA 8535 (April 1941)
Honeysuckle Rose
Gone with the Draft
DECCA 8541 (May 1941)
Babs
Early Morning Blues
DECCA 8556 (June 1941)
Scotchin' with the Soda
Slow Down
DECCA 8571 (September 1941)
This Will Make You Laugh
Hit the Ramp
DECCA 8592 (December 1941)
I Like to Riff
Stop, the Red Light's On

DECCA 8604 (March 1942)
Call the Police
Are You Fer It?
DECCA 8630 (June 1942)
That Ain't Right
Hit That Jive, Jack

The King Cole Quintet
DISC 2010 (1942)
Heads
It Had to Be You
DISC 2011 (1942)
Pro-sky
I Can't Give You Anything but Love

The King Cole Trio
EXCELSIOR 102 (November 1942)
Vom Vim Veedle
All for You
CAPITOL 139 (October 1943) [reissue of Excelsior 102]
All for You
Vom Vim Veedle
PREMIER 100 (April 1944)
F.S.T.
My Lips Remember Your Kisses
CAPITOL 154 (April 1944)
Straighten Up and Fly Right
I Can't See for Lookin'
PREMIER 103 (June 1944)
Got a Penny
Let's Pretend
CAPITOL 169 (September 1944)
Gee, Baby, Ain't I Good to You
I Realize Now
ATLAS 100 (September 1944) [reissue of Premier 100]
F.S.T.
My Lips Remember Your Kisses
ATLAS 102 (October 1944) [reissue of Premier 103]
Got a Penny
Let's Pretend
EXCELSIOR 105 (December 1944)
I'm Lost
Pitchin' Up a Boogie
EXCELSIOR 106 (December 1944)
Beautiful Moons Ago
Let's Spring One
ATLAS 106 (May 1945) [reissue of Premier 103]
Got a Penny
Let's Pretend
CAPITOL 192 (May 1945)
If You Can't Smile and Say Yes
Bring Another Drink
CAPITOL 208 (July 1945)
I'm a Shy Guy
I Tho't You Ought to Know
CAPITOL 224 (November 1945)
Come to Baby, Do
The Frim Fram Sauce
CAPITOL 239 (February 1946)
Sweet Georgia Brown
It Is Better to Be by Yourself
SAVOY 600 (April 1946) [reissue of Ammor 108]
I Like to Riff
On the Sunny Side of the Street
CAPITOL 256 (April 1946)
(Get Your Kicks on) Route 66
Everyone Is Sayin' Hello Again
CAPITOL 274 (June 1946)
You Call It Madness (But I Call It Love)
Oh, But I Do
CAPITOL 304 (September 1946)

(I Love You) For Sentimental Reasons
The Best Man
CAPITOL 311 (October 1946)
The Christmas Song
In the Cool of the Evening
CAPITOL 328 (November 1946)
But She's My Buddy's Chick
That's the Beginning of the End
CAPITOL 356 (January 1947)
I Want to Thank You Folks
You Should Have Told Me
CAPITOL 393 (April 1947)
You Didn't Learn That in School
Meet Me at No Special Place
CAPITOL 418 (May 1947)
Come In Out of the Rain
Can You Look Me in the Eyes?
DECCA 25108 (June 1947) [reissue of Decca 8571/8630]
This Will Make You Laugh
That Ain't Right
DECCA 25109 (June 1947) [reissue of Decca 8520/8556]
This Side Up
Scotchin' with the Soda
CAPITOL 437 (July 1947)
That's What
Naughty Angeline

Johnny Mercer and the King Cole Trio
CAPITOL 15000 (October 1947)
Harmony
Save the Bones for Henry Jones ('Cause Henry Don't Eat No Meat)

The King Cole Trio
CAPITOL 15011 (October 1947)
Those Things Money Can't Buy
Now He Tells Me
CAPITOL 15019 (November 1947)
I Feel So Smoochie
What'll I Do

Johnny Mercer and the King Cole Trio
CAPITOL 15026 (December 1947)
My Baby Likes to Be-Bop
You Can't Make Money Dreaming

The King Cole Trio
CAPITOL 15036 (February 1948)
I've Only Myself to Blame
The Geek
CAPITOL 15054 (March 1948)
Nature Boy
Lost April

Albums

CAPITOL A-8 (September 1944)
The King Cole Trio
CAPITOL BD-29 (June 1946)
The King Cole Trio, Vol. 2
ALADDIN A-1 (July 1946)
King Cole-Lester Young-Red Callander Trio
CAPITOL CE-18 (1947)
The Came Swing (Cole plays piano on two sides)
CAPITOL CE-19 (1947)
This Modern Age (one side by Cole)
CAPITOL CC-59 (December 1947)

The King Cole Trio, Vol. 3
CAPITOL DC-89 (July 1948)
King Cole for Kids
CAPITOL CC-139 (June 1949)
The King Cole Trio, Vol. 4
Capitol eventually reissued these albums in LP form, along with many 45-rpm EPs drawn from them, beginning in 1949.

The Dominoes

The Dominoes
FEDERAL 12001 (December 1950)
Do Something for Me
Chicken Blues
FEDERAL 12010 (January 1951)
Harbor Lights
No! Says My Heart

Little Esther with the Dominoes
FEDERAL 12016 (February 1951)
Other Lips, Other Arms
The Deacon Moves In

The Dominoes
FEDERAL 12022 (April 1951)
Sixty-Minute Man
I Can't Escape from You

Little Esther with the Dominoes
FEDERAL 12036 (November 1951)
Heart to Heart
[reverse: Esther without the Dominoes]

The Dominoes
FEDERAL 12039 (November 1951)
Weeping Willow Blues
I Am with You
FEDERAL 12059 (February 1952)
That's What You're Doing to Me
When the Swallows Come Back to Capistrano
FEDERAL 12068 (April 1952)
Have Mercy Baby
Deep Sea Blues
FEDERAL 12072 (May 1952)
That's What You're Doing to Me [reissue of Federal 12059]
Love, Love, Love

Billy Ward and His Dominoes
FEDERAL 12105 (October 1952)
No Room
I'd Be Satisfied
FEDERAL 12106 (November 1952)
Yours Forever
I'm Lonely
FEDERAL 12114 (December 1952)
Pedal Pushin' Papa
The Bells
FEDERAL 12129 (April 1953)
These Foolish Things Remind Me of You
Don't Leave Me This Way
FEDERAL 12139 (July 1953)
You Can't Keep a Good Man Down
Where Now, Little Heart?
KING 1280 (October 1953)
Rags to Riches
Don't Thank Me
KING 1281 (November 1953)
Christmas in Heaven
Ringing in a Brand New Year

FEDERAL 12162 (December 1953)
My Baby's 3-D
Till the Real Thing Comes Along
FEDERAL 12178 (March 1954)
Tootsie Roll
The Outskirts of Town
KING 1342 (March 1954)
A Little Lie
Tenderly
FEDERAL 12184 (May 1954)
Handwriting on the Wall
One Moment with You
KING 1364 (May 1954)
Three Coins in the Fountain
Lonesome Road
KING 1368 (June 1954)
Little Things Mean a Lot
I Really Don't Want to Know
FEDERAL 12193 (August 1954)
Above Jacob's Ladder
Little Black Train
JUBILEE 5163 (September 1954)
Come to Me, Baby
Gimme, Gimme, Gimme
FEDERAL 12209 (January 1955)
Can't Do Sixty No More
If I Never Get to Heaven
FEDERAL 12218 (April 1955)
Cave Man
Love Me Now or Let Me Go
KING 1492 (July 1955)
Learnin' the Blues
May I Never Love Again
JUBLIEE 5213 (August 1955)
Sweethearts on Parade
Take Me Back to Heaven
KING 1502 (September 1955)
Over the Rainbow
Give Me You
FEDERAL 12263 (April 1956)
Bobby Sox Baby
How Long, How Long Blues
DECCA 29933 (May 1956)
St. Therese of the Roses
Home Is Where You Hang Your Heart
DECCA 30043 (September 196)
Will You Remember
Come On, Snake, Let's Crawl
DECCA 30149 (December 1956)
Evermore
Half a Love

Albums

KING 513 (1956)
All Star Revue (one cut)
KING 528 (1956)
After Hours (one cut)
KING 536 (1956)
Rock 'n' Roll Dance Party (one cut)
KING 295-94 (1956)
Billy Ward and His Dominoes (10-inch LP)
DECCA 8621 (November 1957)
Billy Ward and the Dominoes
LIBERTY 3056 (1957)
Sea of Glass
LIBERTY 3083 (1958)
Yours Forever
KING 548 (1958)
Billy Ward and His Dominoes with Clyde McPhatter
KING 559 (1958)
Clyde McPhatter with Billy Ward and His Dominoes

Federal issued three 45-rpm EPs by the group: *Billy Ward and His Dominoes* (Nos. 212 and 262) and

Billy Ward and His Dominoes Sing the All Time Hit Standards (No. 269). Decca also issued an EP entitled *Billy Ward and His Dominoes* (No. 2549).

Cecil Gant

It should be noted that all of Gant's Four-Star records were originally recorded for Gilt-Edge in 1944–45 (the same man, Richard A. Nelson, ran both those Los Angeles labels), and that all his Dot releases were purchased from Bullet.

Pvt. Cecil Gant

GILT-EDGE 501 (September 1944)
I Wonder
Cecil Boogie
GILT-EDGE 502 (February 1945)
Wake Up, Cecil, Wake Up
Boogie Blues
GILT-EDGE 503 (March 1945)
Put Another Chair at the Table
Cecil's Boogie No. 2
GILT-EDGE 504 (April 1945)
I'll Remember You
Cecil's Mop Mop
GILT-EDGE 505 (April 1945)
The Grass Is Getting Greener Every Day
Syncopated Boogie
GILT-EDGE 506 (May 1945)
I'm Tired
Are You Ready?
GILT-EDGE 507 (May 1945)
You're Going to Cry
Cecil Knows Better Now
GILT-EDGE 508 (June 1945)
Lost Baby Blues
Sooner or Later
GILT-EDGE 509 (June 1945)
I Believe I Will
Fit as a Fiddle
GILT-EDGE 510 (June 1945)
Blues in L.A.
When I Wanted You
GILT-EDGE 511 (June 1945)
In a Little Spanish Town
Hey Boogie
GILT-EDGE 512 (July 1945)
Rhumba Boogie Woogie
Little Baby, You're Running Wild
GILT-EDGE 513 (July 1945)
Way Down
Nothing Bothers Me
GILT-EDGE 514 (August 1945)
What's on Your Worried Mind?
I Gotta Girl
GILT-EDGE 515 (August 1945)
Make Believable Girl
Stuff You Gotta Watch
GILT-EDGE 516 (September 1945)
Jam Jam Blues
I Feel It
GILT-EDGE 517 (September 1945)
Lightning Blues
Solitude
GILT-EDGE 518 (September 1945)
If I Had a Wish
It's a Great Life
GILT-EDGE 519 (September 1945)
Midnight on Central Avenue
How Can I Sleep
BRONZE 117 (October 1945)
I Wonder [reissue of Gilt-Edge 501]

My Last Goodbye
BRONZE 119 (October 1945)
It's All Over Now
Soft and Mellow
BRONZE 120 (October 1945)
Cecil Boogie [reissue of Gilt-Edge 501]
Goodbye
GILT-EDGE 525 (November 1945)
Am I To Blame?
Stella
GILT-EDGE 526 (November 1945)
My Little Baby
In the Evening When the Sun Goes Down
GILT-EDGE 534 (November 1945)
Rainy Weather for Me
Hit That Jive, Jack
GILT-EDGE 538 (January 1946)
Jump, Jump, Jump
Special Delivery

Cecil Gant
BULLET 250 (April 1946)
Nashville Jumps
Loose as a Goose
BULLET 255 (June 1946)
Train Time blues
Sloppy Joe's
BULLET 256 (July 1946)
Boogie Woogie Baby
If It's True
BULLET 257 (September 1946)
I'm All Alone Now
Anna Mae
BULLET 258 (December 1946)
Ninth Street Jive
It's the Girl
BULLET 264 (February 1947)
Boozie Boogie
Every Minute of the Hour
BULLET 265 (April 1947)
Go to Sleep, Little Baby
My, My, My
BOP FEATURES 106 (August 1947)
It's All Over, Darling [reissue of Bronze 119]
I'm Traveling Alone
FOUR-STAR 1159 (September 1947) [reissue of Gilt-Edge 501]
I Wonder
Cecil Boogie
FOUR-STAR 1176 (September 1947) [reissue of Gilt-Edge 538]
Jump, Jump, Jump
Special Delivery
FOUR-STAR 1205 (November 1947) [reissue of Gilt-Edge 502]
Wake Up, Cecil, Wake Up
Boogie Blues
FOUR-STAR 1221 (December 1947)
Killer Diller Boogie
Rainy Weather for Me [reissue of Gilt-Edge 534]
FOUR-STAR 1243 (March 1948)
Am I to Blame? [reissue of Gilt-Edge 525]
Soft and Mellow [reissue of Bronze 119]
BULLET 272 (June 1948)
I Wonder
I Believe I'll Go Back Home
KING 4231 (June 1948)
Why?
Hogan's Alley
BULLET 280 (July 1948)
Another Day, Another Dollar
Three Little Girls
BULLET 289 (September 1948)
I'm a Good Man, but a Poor Man

Cecil's Jam Session
FOUR-STAR 1284 (November 1948)
I'm Traveling Alone [reissue of Bop Features 106]
God Bless My Daddy
BULLET 299 (April 1949)
I Ain't Gonna Cry Anymore
Screwy Boogie
DOWN BEAT 209 (May 1949)
Deal Yourself Another Hand
All Because of You
BULLET 300 (June 1949)
I Hate to Say Goodbye
My Little Baby
FOUR-STAR 1339 (July 1949)
Fare Thee, My Baby
I'll Remember You
BULLET 313 (September 1949)
Rose Room
I'm Singing the Blues Today
FOUR-STAR 1377 (November 1949)
Vibology
Long Distance Call
BULLET 320 (December 1949)
What's the Matter?
You Can't Do Me Right
RECORD SHOP SPECIAL I (December 1949) [reissue of Bullet 255]
Train Time Blues
Sloppy Joe's
FOUR-STAR 1452 (March 1950)
Coming Round the Mountain
[reverse: Ivory Joe Hunter]
IMPERIAL 5066 (March 1950)
You'll Be Sorry
When You Left Me, Baby
FOUR-STAR 1482 (June 1950)
You're Going to Cry [reissue of Gilt-Edge 507]
I've Heard That Jive Before

Gunter Lee Carr
DECCA 48167 (June 1950)
Goodnight Irene
My House Fell Down
DECCA 48170 (July 1950)
We're Gonna Rock
Yesterday

Cecil Gant
DECCA 48171 (July 1950)
Someday You'll Be Sorry
Someday You'll Be Sorry [recitation]
FOUR-STAR 1526 (September 1950)
My Baby Changed
Can't Get You Off My Mind
DECCA 48185 (November 1950)
It's Christmas Time Again
Hello, Santa Claus
DOT 1016 (November 1950)
Cryin' to Myself
Nobody Loves You
DECCA 48190 (December 1950)
Train Time Blues No. 2
It Ain't Gonna Be Like That
DECCA 48200 (January 1951)
Rock Little Baby
Shot Gun Boogie
DOT 1030 (March 1951)
Waiting for My Train
Cindy Lou
IMPERIAL 5112 (April 1951)
Blues by Cecil
Come Home
DOT 1053 (May 1951)
I'm Still in Love with You
Alma
DECCA 48212 (May 1951)

My Little Baby
Don't You Worry
DOT 1069 (July 1951)
Goodbye Blues
Raining Blues
DECCA 48231 (August 1951)
Owl Stew
Playin' Myself the Blues
SWING TIME 209 (August 1951) [reissue of Down Beat 209]
Deal Yourself Another Hand
All Because of You
FOUR-STAR 1561 (August 1951)
Rocking the Boogie
I Will Go on Lovin' You
FOUR-STAR 1584 (September 1951)
Where I Belong
Time Will Tell
DECCA 48249 (October 1951)
God Bless My Daddy
The Grass is Gettin' Greener
DOT 1112 (February 1952)
All by Myself
It Hurts Me Too
SWING TIME 302 (June 1952)
You're Going to Cry
Baby, I'm Losing You
DOT 1121 (July 1952) [reissue of Bullet 255]
Train Time Blues
Sloppy Joe's
FOUR-STAR 1606 (August 1952)
I'm Losing You
Peace and Love

Album

KING 671 (1958)
The Late Cecil Gant

Four-Star issued two Cecil Gant 45-rpm EPs, Nos. 24 and 25.

Hardrock Gunter

Hardrock Gunter and the Pebbles
BAMA 104 (March 1950)
Birmingham Bounce
How Can I Believe You Love Me
BAMA 201 (June 1950)
Gonna Dance All Night
Why Don't You Show Me That You Car

Hardrock Gunter
BULLET 725 (December 1950)
The Little Things You Do
My Bucket's Been Fixed
BAMA 202 (January 1951)
Lonesome Blues
Dad Gave My Hog Away
BULLET 727 (March 1951)
Maybe, Baby, You'll Be True to Me
Rifle Belts and Bayonets
DECCA 46300 (march 1951)
Boogie Woogie on a Saturday Night
Honky Tonk Blues
DECCA 46350 (July 1951)
I've Done Gone Hog Wild
I Believe That Mountain Music Is Here to Stay

Hardrock Gunter and Roberta Lee
DECCa 46363 (September 1951)
Sixty-Minute Man
Tennessee Blues

Hardrock Gunter
DECCA 46367 (September 1951)
Dixieland Boogie
If I Could Only Live My Dreams
DECCA 46383 (November 1951)
Hesitation Boogie
Don't You Agree
DECCA 46401 (January 1952)
Silver and Gold
The Senator from Tennessee
DECCA 28191 (May 1952)
I'm Looking for Another You
Honky Tonk Baby
MGM 11520 (May 1953)
Like the Lovers Do
Naptown, Indiana
DECCA 28932 (November 1953)
You Played on My Piano
Perfect Woman
SUN 201 (May 1954)
Gonna Dance All Night
Fallen Angel
KING 1416 (January 1955)
First Last and Always Game of Love
I Won't Tell Who's to Blame
KING 15055 (1955)
I'll Give 'Em Rhythm
I Put My Britches On Just Like Everybody Else
KING 4858 (November 1955)
Turn the Other Cheek
Before My Time
SUN 248 (June 1956)
Fiddle Bop
Jukebox Help Me Find My Angel

Bill Haley

The Down Homers
VOGUE 736 (1945)
We're Recruiting
Out Where the West Winds Blow

The WOWO Down Homers
VOGUE 786 (1947)
Boogie Woogie Yodel
Baby, I Found Out All about You

Bill Haley and the Four Aces of Western Swing
COWBOY 1201 (July 1948)
Four Leaf Clover Blues
Too Many Parties and Too Many Pals
COWBOY 1202 (February 1949)
Candy Kisses
Tennessee Border

Bill Haley and the Saddle-Men
KEYSTONE 5101 (January 1950)
Deal Me a Hand
Ten Gallon Stetson (With a Hole in the Crown)
KEYSTONE 5102 (March 1950)
I'm Not to Blame
Susan Van Dusan

Bill Haley and R. Browne
COWBOY 1201 (October 1950)
My Palomino and I
My Sweet Little Girl from Nevada

Bill Haley and the Saddle-Men
ATLANTIC 727 (November 1950)
Why Do I Cry Over You
I'm Gonna Dry Every Tear with a Kiss
HOLIDAY 105 (July 1951)

Rocket "88"
Tearstains on My Heart
HOLIDAY 108 (August 1951)
Green Tree Boogie
Down Deep in My Heart

Bill and Loretta with the Saddlemen
HOLIDAY 110 (November 1951)
Pretty Baby
I'm Crying

Bill Haley and the Saddlemen
HOLIDAY 111 (November 1951)
I Don't Want to Be Alone This Christmas
Years Ago This Christmas
HOLIDAY 113 (January 1952)
Juke Box Cannon Ball
Sundown Boogie
ESSEX 303 (March 1952)
Rock the Joint
Icy Heart
ESSEX 305 (June 1952)
Rocking Chair on the Moon
Dance with a Dolly (With a Hole in Her Stocking)

Bill Haley and Haley's Comets
ESSEX 310 (January 1953)
Real Rock Drive
Stop Beatin' Round the Mulberry Bush
ESSEX 321 (April 1953)
Crazy, Man, Crazy
Whatcha Gonna Do
ESSEX 327
Pat-a-Cake
Fractured
ESSEX 332
Live It Up
Farewell, So Long, Goodbye
ESSEX 340
I'll Be True
Ten Little Indians
ESSEX 348
Straight Jacket
Chattanooga Choo-Choo

Bill Haley and His Comets
DECCA 29124 (April 1954)
(We're Gonna) Rock Around the Clock
Thirteen Women (And Only One Man in Town)
DECCA 29204 (June 1954)
Shake, Rattle and Roll
ABC Boogie
DECCA 29317 (October 1954)
Dim Dim the Lights (I Want Some Atmosphere)
Happy Baby
DECCA 29418 (January 1955)
Mambo Rock
Birth of the Boogie
DECCA 29552 (June 1955)
Razzle-Dazzle
Two Hound Dogs
ESSEX 399 (June 1955)
Rock the Joint [reissue of Essex 303]
Farewell, So Long, Goodbye [reissue of Essex 332]
DECCA 29713 (October 1955)
Rock-a-Beatin' Boogie
Burn That Candle
DECCA 29791 (December 1955)
See You Later, Alligator
The Paper Boy
DECCA 29870 (March 1956)
The Saints Rock 'n' Roll
R-O-C-K

DECCA 29948 (May 1956)
Hot Dog, Buddy Buddy
Rockin' through the Rye
DECCA 30028 (July 1956)
Teenager's Mother (Are You Right?)
Rip It Up
DECCA 30085 (September 1956)
Rudy's Rock
Blue Comet Blues
DECCA 30148 (November 1956)
Don't Knock the Rock
Choo Choo Ch'Boogie

Albums

ESSEX 202 (1955)
Rock with Bill Haley and the Comets
DECCA 5260 (1955)
Shake, Rattle and Roll (10-inch LP)
DECCA 8225 (December 1955)
Rock Around the Clock
DECCA 8315 (1956)
He Digs Rock 'n' Roll (four cuts by Haley)
DECCA 8345 (June 1956)
Rock 'n' Roll Stage Show
DECCA 8569 (1958)
Rockin' the Oldies

In addition to these albums, both Essex and Decca issued various 4-rpm EPs: *Bill Haley's Dance Party* (Essex 102), *Rock with Bill Haley and the Comets* (Essex 117 and 118), *Shake, Rattle and Roll* (Decca 2168), *Dim, Dim the Lights* (Decca 2209), *Rock 'n' Roll* (Decca 2322), *He Digs Rock 'n' Roll* (Decca 2398), *Rock 'n' Roll Stage Show* (Decca 2416, 2417, and 2418), and *Rockin' the Oldies* (Decca 2532, 2533, and 2534).

Roy Hall

Roy Hall and His Cohutta Mountain Boys
FORTUNE 126 (1949)
Okee Doaks
Dirty Boogie
FORTUNE 133 (December 1949)
Never Marry a Tennessee Girl
We Never Get Too Big to Cry
FORTUNE 139 (March 1950)
Five Years in Prison [vocal: Frankie Brumbalough]
My Freckle Face Gal [vocal: Bud White]
BULLET 704 (April 1950)
Mule Boogie
Old Folks Jamboree
BULLET 712 (August 1950)
Ain't You Afraid?
Turn My Picture to the Wall

Roy Hall
TENNESSEE 813 (1952)
Back Up and Push
Golden Slippers
TENNESSEE 835 (1952)
John Henry
Put On Your Old Gray Bonnet
DECCA 29697 (September 1955)
Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On
All by Myself
DECCA 29786 (December 1955)
See You Later, Alligator
Don't Stop Now

FORTUNE 521 (December 1955)
Don't Ask Me No Questions
Corrine Corrina
DECCA 29880 (January 1956)
Blue Suede Shoes
Luscious
DECCA 30060 (May 1956)
Three Alley Cats
Diggin' the Boogie

Wynonie Harris

Lucky Millinder and His Orchestra
DECCA 18609 (July 1944)
Hurry, Hurry
[reverse: without Harris]
DECCA 18674 (April 1945)
Who Threw the Whiskey in the Well?
[reverse: without Harris]

Wynonie "(Mr. Blues)" Harris and Johnny Otis' All Stars
PHILO 103 (September 1945)
Around the Clock, Part 1
Around the Clock, Part 2
PHILO 104 (September 1945)
Cock-A-Doodle-Doo
Yonder Comes My Baby

Wynonie "Blues" Harris
APOLLO 360 (October 1945)
Young Man's Blues
Straighten Him Out
APOLLO 361 (October 1945)
That's the Stuff You Gotta Watch
Baby, Look at You
APOLLO 362 (October 1945)
Wynonie's Blues
Somebody Changed the Lock on My Door
APOLLO 363 (November 1945)
She's Gone with the Wind
Here Comes the Blues
APOLLO 372 (April 1946)
Playful Baby
Papa Tree Top

Wynonie (Mr. Blues) Harris
BULLET 251 (April 1946)
Dig This Boogie
Lightnin' Struck the Poor House
BULLET 252 (May 1946)
My Baby's Barrel House
Drinkin' by Myself

Wynonie Harris with the Hamp-Tone All Stars
HAMP-TONE 100 (May 1946)
Hey Ba-Ba-Re-Bop, Part 1
Hey Ba-Ba-Re-Bop, Part 2
HAMP-TONE 103 (May 1946)
Good Morning Corinne
In the Evenin' Blues

Wynonie "Blues" Harris
APOLLO 378 (November 1946)
Time to Change Your Town
Everybody's Boogie
APOLLO 381 (December 1946)
Young and Wild
Take Me Out of the Rain

Wynonie "Mr. Blues" Harris and His All Stars
ALADDIN 171 (January 1947)
Mr. Blues Jumped the Rabbit
Whiskey & Jelly Roll Blues

ALADDIN 172 (January 1947)
Rugged Road
Come Back Baby

Wynonie "Blues" Harris
APOLLO 387 (March 1947)
I Gotta Lyin' Woman
Rebecca's Blues

Wynonie "Mr. Blues" Harris and His All-Stars
ALADDIN 196 (September 1947)
Ghost of a Chance
Big City Blues
ALADDIN 208 (February 1948)
Hard Ridin' Mama
You Got to Get Yourself a Job, Girl

Wynonie Harris
KING 4202 (February 1948)
Wynonie's Boogie
Rose Get Your Clothes
KING 4210 (February 1948)
Good Rockin' Tonight
Good Morning Mr. Blues
KING 4217 (March 1948)
Your Money Don't Mean a Thing
Love Is Like Rain
KING 4226 (May 1948)
Lollipop Mama
Blow Your Brains Out
KING 4252 (September 1948)
Bite Again, Bite Again
Blowin' to California
KING 4276 (January 1949)
I Feel That Old Age Coming On
Grandma Plays the Numbers
MONOGRAM 123 (June 1949)
Wynonie's Blues [reissue of Apollo 362]
Playful Baby [reissue of Apollo 372]
KING 4292 (June 1949)
Drinkin' Wine, Spo-Dee-O-Dee
She Just Won't Sell No More
KING 4304 (August 1949)
All She Wants to Do Is Rock
I Want My Fanny Brown
KING 4330 (December 1949)
Baby, Shame on You
Sittin' on It All the Time
KING 4342 (February 1950)
I Can't Take It No More
I Like My Baby's Pudding
KING 4378 (June 1950)
Stormy Night Blues
Good Morning Judge
KING 4389 (August 1950)
Rock Mr. Blues
Be Mine My Love
KING 4402 (September 1950)
Mr. Blues Is Coming to Town
I Want to Love You Baby
KING 4415 (October 1950)
Triflin' Woman
Put It Back

Wynonie Harris and the Lucky Millinder Orchestra
KING 4418 (October 1950)
Oh, Babe!
[reverse: without Harris]
KING 4419 (October 1950)
Teardrops from My Eyes
[reverse: without Harris]

Wynonie Harris
KING 4445 (April 1950)
A Love Untrue
I Believe I'll Fall in Love
KING 4448 (April 1950)

Tremblin'
Just Like Two Drops of Water
KING 4461 (June 1950)
Bloodshot Eyes
Confessin' the Blues
KING 4468 (August 1951)
Man, Have I Got Troubles
I'll Never Give Up

Wynonie Harris with the Todd Rhodes Orchestra
KING 4485 (November 1951)
Lovin' Machine
Luscious Woman

Wynonie Harris
KING 4507 (February 1952)
My Playful Baby's Gone
Here Comes the Night

Wynonie Harris with the Todd Rhodes Orchestra
KING 4526 (March 1952)
Married Women—Stay Married
Keep on Churnin'

The Royals
FEDERAL 12064 (April 1952)
All Night Long
[reverse: without Harris]

Wynonie Harris
KING 4555 (July 1952)
Night Train
Do It Again, Please
KING 4565 (October 1952)
Drinking Blues
Adam Come and Get Your Rib
KING 4592 (December 1952)
Rot Gut
Greyhound
KING 4593 (December 1952)
Bad News Baby
Bring It Back
KING 4620 (March 1953)
Wasn't That Good
Mama, Your Daughter Done Lied to Me
KING 4635 (May 1953)
The Deacon Don't Like It
Song of the Bayou

Wynonie Harris and Joe Turner
ALADDIN 3184 (June 1953)
Battle of the Blues, Part 1
Battle of the Blues, Part 2

Wynonie Harris
KING 4668 (October 1953)
Please, Louise
Nearer My Love to Thee
KING 4685 (January 1954)
Quiet Whiskey
Down Boy Down
KING 4716 (May 1954)
Keep A Talkin'
Shake That Thing
KING 4724 (July 1954)
I Get a Thrill
Don't Take My Whiskey Away from Me
KING 4763 (November 1954)
All She Wants to Do Is Mambo
Christina
KING 4774 (February 1955)
Good Mambo Tonight
Git to Gittin' Baby
KING 4789 (April 1955)
Mr. Dollar
Fishtail Blues

KING 4814 (June 1955)
Drinkin' Sherry Wine
Git with the Grits
KING 4826 (August 1955)
Wine, Wine, Sweet Wine
Man's Best Friend
KING 4839 (October 1955)
Shotgun Wedding
I Don't Know Where to Go
KING 4852 (November 1955)
Bloodshot Eyes [reissue of King 4461]
Good Morning Judge [reissue of King 4378]

Wynonie Harris with Orchestra
ATCO 6081 (October 1956)
Tell a Whale of a Tale
Destination Love

Albums

ALADDIN 703 (January 1951)
Party After Hours (10-inch LP; two cuts by Harris)
KING 513 (1955)
All-Star Revue (one cut)
ALADDIN 813 (1956)
Party After Hours (12-inch LP)
KING 536 (1956)
Rock 'n' Roll Dance Party (one cut by Harris)
KING 607 (1958)
Battle of the Blues (seven cuts by Harris)
KING 627 (1958)
Battle of the Blues, Vol. 2 (seven cuts by Harris)
King also released two Roy Brown-Wynonie Harris *Battle of the Blues* 45-rpm EPs, Nos. 250 and 254, in 1958, and one called *Wynonie Harris,* No. 260. A 45-rpm EP by Harris, *Good Rockin' Tonight* (King EP 260), was released in 1958.

Jay Hawkins

Jalacy Hawkins with the Tiny Grimes Band
GOTHAM 295 (1953)
Why Do You Waste My Time?
Carnation Hop Boogie

Jalacy Hawkins
TIMELY 1004 (March 1954)
Baptize Me in Wine
Not Anymore
TIMELY 1005 (March 1954)
I Found My Way to Wine
Please Try to Understand

Jay Hawkins
MERCURY 70549 (February 1955)
(She Put the) Wamee (On Me)
This Is All
WING 90005 (May 1955)
Well, I Tried
You're All of Life to Me

Screamin' Jay Hawkins
GRAND 135 (January 1956)
I Is
Take Me Back

Jay Hawkins
WING 90055 (January 1956)
Talk About Me
Even Though

Screamin' Jay Hawkins

OKEH 7072 (October 1956)
I Put a Spell on You
Little Demon

OKEH 7084 (December 1956)
You Made Me Love You
Darling Please Forgive Me

OKEH 7087 (1957)
Frenzy
Person to Person

OKEH 7101 (1957)
Alligator Wine
There's Something Wrong with You

APOLLO 506 (1957)
Not Anymore [reissue of Timely 1004]
Please Try to Understand [reissue of Timely 1005]

APOLLO 528 (1957)
Baptize Me in Wine [reissue of Timely 1004]
Not Anymore [alternate take]

Album

EPIC LN-3448 (April 1958)
At Home with Screamin' Jay Hawkins

Wanda Jackson

DECCA 29140 (June 1954)
You Can't Have My Love [with Billy Gray]
Lovin', Country Style

DECCA 29253 (August 1954)
The Right to Love
If You Knew What I Knew

DECCA 29267 (September 1954)
If You Don't Somebody Else Will [with Billy Gray]
You'd Be the First One to Know

DECCA 29514 (April 1955)
Tears at the Grand Ole Opry
Nobody's Darlin' but Mine

DECCA 29677 (October 1955)
It's the Same World
Don't Do the Things He'd Do

DECCA 29803 (January 1956)
Wasted
I Cried Again

CAPITOL 3485 (July 1956)
I Gotta Know
Half as Good a Girl

CAPITOL 3575 (October 1956)
Hot Dog! That Made Him Mad
Silver Threads and Golden Needles

DECCA 30153 (November 1956)
You Won't Forget (About Me)
The Heart You Could Have Had

CAPITOL 3637 (January 1957)
Cryin' through the Night
Baby Loves Him

CAPITOL 3683 (March 1957)
Don'a Wan'a
Let Me Explain

CAPITOL 3764 (July 1957)
Cool Love
Did You Miss Me?

CAPITOL 3843 (December 1957)
Fujiyama Mama
No Wedding Bells for Joe

Album

CAPITOL T-1041 (July 1958)
Wanda Jackson

Louis Jordan

For the various recordings, 1929–1938, on which Louis Jordan played alto saxophone, see the index of Brian Rust's *Jazz Records 1897–1942.*

Chick Webb and His Orchestra

DECCA 1115 (1937)
Gee, But You're Swell
Love Marches On [vocal by trio]
DECCA 1213 (1937)
It's Swell of You
Wake Up and Live [vocal by trio]
DECCA 1273 (1937)
Rusty Hinge
Cryin' Mood [vocal: Ella Fitzgerald]

Louis Jordan's Elks Rendezvous Band

DECCA 7556 (1939)
Honey in the Bee Ball
Barnacle Bill the Sailor

Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five

DECCA 7590 (1939)
Doug the Jitterbug
Flat Face
DECCA 7609 (1939)
At the Swing Cats' Ball
Keep A-Knockin'
DECCA 7623 (1939)
Sam Jones Done Snagged His Britches
Swingin' in the Cocoanut Trees
DECCA 7675 (1939)
Honeysuckle Rose
But I'll Be Back
DECCA 7693 (1940)
You Ain't Nowhere
'Fore Day Blues
DECCA 7705 (1940)
You Run Your Mouth and I'll Run My Business
Hard Lovin' Blues [vocal: Yack Taylor]
DECCA 7719 (1940)
You're My Meat
Jake, What a Snake
DECCA 7723 (1940)
I'm Alabama Bound
June Tenth Jamboree
DECCA 7729 (1940)
You Got to Go When Your Wagon Comes [vocal: Daisy Winchester]
After School Swing Session
DECCA 7745 (1940)
Somebody Done Hoodooed the Hoodoo Man
Lovie Joe [vocal: Mabel Robinson]
DECCA 7777 (1940)
Never Let Your Left Hand Know What Your Right Hand's Doin'
Penthouse in the Basement
DECCA 3253 (1940)
Don't Come Cryin' on My Shoulder
Bounce the Ball (Do Da Dittle Um Day)
DECCA 3360 (1940)
Oh Boy, I'm in the Groove
Waitin' for the Robert E. Lee
DECCA 8500 (1940)
Do You Call That a Buddy?
Pompton Turnpike
DECCA 8501 (1940)

A Chicken Ain't Nothin' but a Bird
I Know (I Know What You Wanna Do)
DECCA 8525 (1941)
T-Bone Blues
Pinetop's Boogie Woogie
DECCA 8537 (1941)
The Two Little Squirrels (Nuts to You)
Pan-Pan
DECCA 8560 (1941)
Saxa-Woogie
Brotherly Love
DECCA 8581 (1941)
Boogie Woogie Came to Town
St. Vitus Dance
DECCA 8593 (January 1942)
I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of Town
Knock Me a Kiss
DECCA 8605 (1942)
How 'Bout That?
The Green Grass Grows All Around
DECCA 8627 (June 1942)
Small Town Boy
Mama Mama Blues
DECCA 8638 (August 1942)
I'm Gonna Leave You on the Outskirts of Town
It's a Low-Down Dirty Shame
DECCA 8645 (September 1942)
What's the Use of Getting Sober (When You're Gonna Get Drunk Again)?
The Chicks I Pick Are Slender and Tender and Tall
DECCA 8653 (November 1943)
Five Guys Named Moe
That'll Just 'bout Knock Me Out
DECCA 8654 (December 1943)
Ration Blues
Deacon Jones
DECCA 8659 (January 1944)
G.I. Jive
Is You Is or Is You Ain't

Bing Crosby with Louis Jordan and His Band
DECCA 2347 (October 1944)
(Yip Yip Hootie) My Baby Said Yes
Your Socks Don't Match

Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five
DECCA 8668 (March 1945)
Mop! Mop!
You Can't Get That No More
DECCA 8670 (May 1945)
Caldonia Boogie
Somebody Done Changed the Lock on My Door
DECCA 18734 (October 1945)
Buzz Me
Don't Worry 'bout That Mule
DECCA 18762 (January 1946)
Reconversion Blues
Salt Pork, West Virginia
DECCA 18818 (March 1946)
Beware
Don't Let the Sun Catch You Cryin'

Ella Fitzgerald with Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five
DECCA 23546 (June 1946)
Stone Cold Dead in the Market (He Had It Comin')
Peetootie Pie

Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five

DECCA 23610 (July 1946)
Choo Choo Ch'Boogie
That Chick's Too Young to Fry
DECCA 23669 (September 1946)
Ain't That Just Like a Woman
If It's Love You Want, Baby
DECCA 23741 (November 1946)
Ain't Nobody Here but Us Chickens
Let the Good Times Roll
DECCA 23810 (January 1947)
I Like 'Em Fat Like That
Texas and Pacific
DECCA 23841 (February 1947)
Open the Door, Richard
It's So Easy
DECCA 23901 (May 1947)
Jack, You're Dead
I Know What You're Puttin' Down
DECCA 23931 (June 1947) [reissue of Decca 18818]
Beware
Don't Let the Sun Catch You Cryin'
DECCA 23932 (June 1947) [reissue of Decca 8670]
Caldonia Boogie
Somebody Done Changed the Lock on My Door
DECCA 24104 (July 1947)
Boogie Woogie Blue Plate
Sure Had a Wonderful Time
DECCA 24155 (September 1947)
Look Out
Early in the Mornin'
DECCA 24300 (January 1948)
Reet Petite and Gone
Inflation Blues
DECCA 24448 (May 1948)
Run Joe
All for the Love of Lil
DECCA 24483 (June 1948)
Don't Burn the Candle at Both Ends [with Martha Davis]
We Can't Agree
DECCA 25394 (July 1948)
Saxa-Woogie [reissue of Decca 8560]
Pinetop's Boogie Woogie [reissue of Decca 8525]
DECCA 24502 (September 1948)
Daddy-O [with Martha Davis]
You're on the Right Track, Baby [with Martha Davis]
DECCA 24633 (May 1949)
Have You Got Gumption?
Roamin' Blues
DECCA 24633 (May 1949)
Every Man to His Own Profession
Cole Slaw
DECCA 24673 (July 1949)
Beans and Corn Bread
Chicky-Mo Craney Cow
DECCA 24725 (September 1949)
Saturday Night Fish Fry, Part 1
Saturday Night Fish Fry, Part 2
DECCA 24815 (December 1949)
I Know What I've Got
School Days
DECCA 24877 (January 1950)
Hungry Man
Push Ka Pee Shee Pie
DECCA 24981 (February 1950)
Heed My Warning
Baby's Gonna Go Bye-Bye
DECCA 25473 (March 1950)
Honeysuckle Rose [reissue of Decca 7675]
T-Bone Blues [reissue of 8525]
DECCA 27058 (April 1950)

Onions
Psycho-Loco
DECCA 27114 (July 1950)
Blue Light Boogie, Part 1
Blue Light Boogie, Part 2
DECCA 27129 (August 1950)
I Want a Roof over My Head (And Bread on the Table)
Show Me How (To Milk the Cow)

Ella Fitzgerald with Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five
DECCA 27200 (September 1950)
Ain't Nobody's Business
I'll Never Be Free

Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five
DECCA 27203 (October 1950)
Tambouritza Boogie
Trouble then Satisfaction

Louis Armstrong with Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five
DECCA 27212 (November 1950)
Life Is So Peculiar
You Rascal You

Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five
DECCA 27324 (December 1950)
Chartreuse
Lemonade
DECCA 27428 (February 1951)
Teardrops from My Eyes
It's a Great, Great Pleasure
DECCA 27547 (March 1951)
Weak Mined Blues
Is My Pop in There?
DECCA 27620 (June 1951)
I Can't Give You Anything but Love
You Will Always Have a Friend
DECCA 27648 (July 1951)
If You're So Smart
How Blue Can You Get?

Louis Jordan and His Orchestra
DECCA 27694 (September 1951)
Three Handed Woman
Please Don't Leave Me
DECCA 27784 (October 1951)
Trust in Me
Cock-a-Doodle-Doo
DECCA 27806 (November 1951)
May Every Day Be Christmas
Bone Dry
DECCA 27898 (December 1951)
Lay Something on the Bar (Besides Your Elbows)
No Sale

Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five
DECCA 27969 (January 1952)
Work, Baby, Work
Louisville Lodge Meeting

Louis Jordan and His Orchestra
DECCA 28088 (March 1952)
Never Trust a Woman
Slow Down

Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five
DECCA 28211 (May 1952)
Junco Partner
Azure-Te

DECCA 28225 (June 1952)
Jordan for President
Oil Well, Texas

Louis Jordan and His Orchestra
DECCA 28335 (July 1952)
All of Me
There Goes My Heart

Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five
DECCA 28444 (October 1952)
Friendship
You're Much Too Fat
DECCA 28543 (December 1952)
You Didn't Want Me, Baby
A Man's Best Friend Is a Bed

Louis Jordan with Nelson Riddle's Orchestra
DECCA 28664 (March 1953)
It's Better to Wait for Love
Just Like a Butterfly (That's Caught in the Rain)

Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five
DECCA 28756 (June 1953)
House Party
Hog Wash
DECCA 28820 (August 1953)
There Must Be a Way
Time Marches On
DECCA 28883 (October 1953)
I Want You to Be My Baby
You Know It Too
DECCA 28983 (December 1953)
The Soona Baby
Fat Sam from Birmingham
DECCA 29018 (January 1954)
Lollipop
Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out
ALADDIN 3223 (January 1954)
Dad Gum Ya Hide, Boy
Whiskey, Do Your Stuff
ALADDIN 3227 (February 1954)
I'll Die Happy
Ooo-Wee
ALADDIN 3243 (April 1954)
Hurry Home
A Dollar Down
ALADDIN 3246 (May 1954)
I Seen Whatcha Done
Messy Bessy

Louis Jordan with Nelson Riddle's Orchestra
DECCA 29166 (July 1954)
Only Yesterday
I Didn't Know What Time It Was

Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five
ALADDIN 3249 (July 1954)
Louis' Blues
If I Had Any Sense
DECCA 29263 (August 1954)
Wake Up, Jacob
If It's True
ALADDIN 3264 (October 1954)
Put Some Money in the Pot, Boy, 'Cause the Juice is Running Low
Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, Baby
ALADDIN 3270 (November 1954)
Fat Back and Corn Liquor
The Dripper
DECCA 29424 (January 1955)
Perdido

Locked-Up
ALADDIN 3279 (February 1955)
Gal, You Need a Whippin'
Time Is Passin'
DECCA 29655 (September 1955)
Come and Get It
I Want You to Be My Baby [reissue of Decca 28883]
ALADDIN 3295 (October 1955)
It's Hard to Be Good
Gotta Go
VIK 0148 (December 1955)
Baby, Let's Do It
Bananas
VIK 0182 (January 1956)
Chicken Back
Where Can I Go?
VIK 0192 (February 1956)
Rock 'n' Roll Call
Baby, You're Just Too Much
DECCA 29860 (March 1956)
I Gotta Move
Everything That's Made of Wood
MERCURY 70993 (November 1956)
Big Bess
Cat Scratchin'

Albums

DECCA A-246 (February 1942)
Alto Saxology ("Waitin' for the Robert E. Lee")
DECCA A-459 (August 1946)
Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five
DECCA A-645 (March 1948)
Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five, Vol. II
MERCURY 20242 (February 1957)
Somebody Up There Digs Me
MERCURY 20331 (January 1958)
Man, We're Wailin'
SCORE 4007 (April 1958)
Come Blow Your Horn
A 45-rpm EP album, *Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five* (Decca ED-2029), was issued in May 1953.

Jimmie Logsdon

DECCA 28502 (November 1952)
That's When I'll Love You Best
I Wanna Be Mama'd
DECCA 28584 (January 1953)
The Death of Hank Williams
Hank Williams Sings the Blues No More
DECCA 28726 (June 1953)
As Long as We're Together
The Love You Gave Me
DECCA 28864 (September 1953)
Where the Old Red River Flows
Let's Have a Happy Time
DECCA 28913 (October 1953)
Pa-Paya Mama
In the Mission of St. Augustine
DECCA 29075 (March 1954)
Good Deal Lucille
Midnight Boogie
DECCA 29122 (May 1954)
My Sweet French Baby
These Lonesome Blues
DECCA 29337 (December 1954)
I'm Goin' Back to Tennessee
You Ain't Nothin' but the Blues

DOT 1274 (November 1955)
Cold, Cold Rain
Midnight Blues

Skeets McDonald

Skeets McDonald
LONDON 16046 (November 1950)
Please, Daddy, Don't Go to War
So I Cried Myself to Sleep

Johnny White and His Rhythm Riders
FORTUNE 145 (December 1950)
The Tattooed Lady
Mean and Evil Blues

Skeets McDonald
CAPITOL 1518 (May 1951)
Scoot, Git and Begone
Blues is Bad News
CAPITOL 1570 (June 1951)
Bless Your Little Ol' Heart
Today I'm Movin' Out
CAPITOL 1771 (August 1951)
I'm Hurtin'
Ridin' with the Blues

Skeets McDonald, Benny Walker, Johnny White's Band
FORTUNE 165 (September 1951)
Birthday Cake Boogie
[reverse: by Bob Sykes]

Skeets McDonald
CAPITOL 1890 (November 1951)
Fuss and Fight
Baby Brown Eyes
CAPITOL 1967 (January 1952)
Be My Life's Companion
Tell Me Why
CAPITOL 1993 (February 1952)
Wheel of Fortune
The Love That Hurt Me So
CAPITOL 2073 (May 1952)
Curtain of Tears
Please Come Back
CAPITOL 2216 (September 1952)
Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes
Big Family Trouble
CAPITOL 2326 (January 1953)
Let Me Know
I'm Sorry to Say I'm Sorry
CAPITOL 2434 (April 1953)
I Can't Last Long
I've Got to Win Your Love Again
CAPITOL 2523 (June 1953)
It's Your Life
Baby, I'm Countin'
CAPITOL 2607 (September 1953)
Looking at the Moon and Wishing on a Star
I Need Your Love
CAPITOL 2696 (December 1953)
Look Who's Cryin' Now
Walking on Teardrops
CAPITOL 2774 (April 1954)
I Love You, Mama Mia
Remember You're Mine
CAPITOL 2885 (August 1954)
Your Love Is Like a Faucet
But I Do
CAPITOL 2976 (October 1954)
Smoke Comes Out of My Chimney
Just the Same
Each Time a New Love Dies

CAPITOL 3038 (January 1955)
I Can't Stand It Any Longer
Number One in Your Heart
CAPITOL 3117 (April 1955)
You're Too Late
A Losing Hand
CAPITOL 3215 (August 1955)
Strollin'
You Turned Me Down
CAPITOL 3312 (December 1955)
I Got a New Field to Plow
Baby, I'm Lost without You
CAPITOL 3378 (February 1956)
It'll Take Me a Long, Long Time
Fallen Angel
CAPITOL 3461 (June 1956)
You Oughta See Grandma Rock
Heart-Breakin' Mama
CAPITOL 3525 (August 1956)
You Gotta Be My Baby
Somebody
CAPITOL 3600 (November 1956)
You Better Not Go
Don't Push Me Too Far

Album

CAPITOL T-1040 (June 1958)
Goin' Steady with the Blues
A 45-rpm EP, *Country and Hillbilly Songs by Skeets McDonald* (Capitol EP-451), was issued in August 1953.

Stick McGhee

Stick McGhee and His Buddies
HARLEM 1018 (1947)
Drinkin' Wine Spo-Dee-O-Dee
Baby, Baby Blues
ATLANTIC 873 (March 1949)
Drinkin' Wine Spo-Dee-O-Dee
Blues Mixture
DECCA 48104 (May 1949)
[reissue of Harlem 1018]
Drinkin' Wine Spo-Dee-O-Dee
Baby, Baby Blues
ATLANTIC 881 (June 1949)
I'll Always Remember
Lonesome Road Blues
ATLANTIC 898 (January 1950)
Drank Up All the Wine Last Night
Southern Menu

Van Walls Orchestra
ATLANTIC 904 (March 1950)
Ain't Gonna Scold You
Tee-Nah-Nah

Stick McGhee and His Buddies
ATLANTIC 909 (May 1950)
My Baby's Comin' Back
Venus Blues

Stick McGhee and His Spo-Dee-O-Dee Buddies
ATLANTIC 910 (July 1950)
Let's Do It (Stick's Confusion)
She's Gone

Stick McGhee and His Buddies
ATLANTIC 926 (January 1951)
Housewarming Boogie (Warm This House)
Blue and Brokenhearted
ATLANTIC 926 (February 1951)
Housewarming Boogie (Warm This House) [same as above]
Tennessee Waltz Blues

Sticks McGhee
LONDON 970 (February 1951)
Oh, What a Face
You Gotta Have Something on the Ball

Stick McGhee and His Buddies
ATLANTIC 937 (April 1951)
One Monkey Don't Stop the Show
Blues Barrelhouse
ATLANTIC 955 (January 1952)
Wee Wee Hours, Part 1
Wee Wee Hours, Part 2

Brownie McGhee
SAVOY 835 (January 1952)
So Much Trouble
Diamond Ring

Sticks McGhee
ESSEX 709 (1952)
My Little Rose
No More Reveille

Stick McGhee and His Buddies
ATLANTIC 991 (March 1953)
New Found Love
Meet You in the Morning

Sticks McGhee
KING 4610 (March 1953)
Head Happy with Wine
Little Things We Used to Do
KING 4628 (May 1953)
Blues in My Heart
Whiskey, Women and Loaded Dice
KING 4672 (November 1953)
Dealin' from the Bottom
Jungle Juice
KING 4700 (March 1954)
I'm Doin' All This Time (and You Put Me Down)
The Wiggle Waggle Woo

Stick McGhee and the Ramblers
SAVOY 1148 (January 1955)
Things Have Changed
Help Me Baby

Stick McGhee
KING 4783 (March 1955)
Double Crossin' Liquor
Six to Eight
KING 4800 (May 1955)
Get Your Mind Out of the Gutter
Sad, Bad, Glad

Album

AUDIO-LAB 1520 (1958)
Highway of Blues (eight cuts by McGhee)

The Midnighters

The Royals
FEDERAL 12064 (March 1952)
Every Beat of My Heart
All Night Long [with Wynonie Harris]
FEDERAL 12077 (June 1952)
Starting from Tonight
I Know I Love You So
FEDERAL 12088 (July 1952)
Moonrise
Fifth Street Blues

FEDERAL 12113 (November 1952)
Are You Forgetting?
What Did I Do?
FEDERAL 12121 (April 1953)
The Shrine of St. Cecilia
I Feel So Blue
FEDERAL 12133 (May 1953)
Get It
No It Ain't
FEDERAL 12150 (October 1953)
Hey Miss Fine
I Feel That-a-Way
FEDERAL 12160 (December 1953)
That's It
Someone Like You
FEDERAL 12169 (February 1954)
Work with Me Annie
Until I Die

The Midnighters
FEDERAL 12169 (March 1954)
Work with Me Annie
Until I Die
FEDERAL 12177 (March 1954)
Give It Up
That Woman
FEDERAL 12185 (May 1954)
Sexy Ways
Don't Say Your Last Goodbye
FEDERAL 12195 (August 1954)
Annie Had a Baby
She's the One
FEDERAL 12200 (October 1954)
Annie's Aunt Fanny
Crazy Loving
FEDERAL 12202 (December 1954)
Tell Them
Stingy Little Thing
FEDERAL 12205 (January 1955)
Moonrise [reissue of Federal 12088]
She's the One
FEDERAL 12210 (February 1955)
Ashamed of Myself
Ring A-Ling A-Ling
FEDERAL 12220 (April 1955)
Why Are We Apart?
Switchie Witchie Tichie
FEDERAL 12224 (May 1955)
Henry's Got Flat Feet
Whatsoever You Do
FEDERAL 12227 (June 1955)
It's Love Baby
Looka Here
FEDERAL 12230 (June 1955) [reissue of Federal 12177]
Give It Up
That Woman
FEDERAL 12240 (August 1955)
Rock and Roll Wedding
That House on the Hill
FEDERAL 12243 (September 1955)
Don't Change Your Pretty Ways
We'll Never Meet Again
FEDERAL 12251 (January 1956)
Partners for Life
Sweet Mama, Do Right
FEDERAL 12260 (February 1956)
Rock, Granny, Roll
Open Up the Back Door
FEDERAL 12270 (April 1956)
Tore Up Over You
Early One Morning
FEDERAL 12285 (October 1956)
I'll Be Home Someday
Come On and Get It
FEDERAL 12288 (December 1956)
Let Me Hold Your Hand
Ooh Bah Baby

Albums

KING 513 (1956)
All Star Revue (one cut)
KING 536 (1956)
Rock 'n' Roll Dance Party (one cut)
KING 295-90 (1956)
The Midnighters Sing Their Hits (10-inch LP)
FEDERAL 541 (December 1957)
Their Greatest Hits
FEDERAL 581 (August 1958)
Greatest Hits, Vol. 2
A 45-rpm EP, *The Midnighters Sing Their Greatest Hits* (FEP-333), was issued by Federal in 1958. A Midnighters cut was also included in the Federal EP *Rock and Roll Hit Parade* (FEP-387).

Amos Milburn

Amos Milburn
ALADDIN 159 (July 1946)
After Midnight
Amos' Blues
ALADDIN 160 (August 1946)
My Baby's Boogin'
Darling How Long
ALADDIN 161 (September 1946)
Down the Road Apiece
Don't Beg Me
ALADDIN 173 (January 1947)
Amos' Boogie
Everything I Do Is Wrong
ALADDIN 174 (January 1947)
Operation Blues
Cinch Blues
ALADDIN 191 (August 1947)
Money Hustlin' Woman
Real Gone!
ALADDIN 201 (October 1947)
My Love Is Limited
Blues at Sundown
ALADDIN 202 (October 1947)
Sad and Blue
That's My Chick
ALADDIN 206 (January 1948)
Train Time Blues
Bye Bye Boogie
ALADDIN 211 (March 1948)
Pool Playing Blues
I Still Love You
ALADDIN 3014 (September 1948)
Chicken Shack Boogie
It Took a Long, Long Time
ALADDIN 3018 (October 1948)
Bewildered
A&M Blues
ALADDIN 3023 (March 1949)
Jitterbug Parade
Hold Me Baby
ALADDIN 3026 (May 1949)
Pot Luck Boogie
In the Middle of the Night
ALADDIN 3032 (August 1949)
Roomin' House Boogie
Empty Arms Blues

Amos Milburn and His Aladdin Chicken-Shackers
ALADDIN 3037 (October 1949)
Let's Make Christmas Merry, Baby
Bow-Wow!
ALADDIN 3038 (November 1949)
Real Pretty Mama Blues

Drifting Blues
ALADDIN 3043 (January 1950)
I'm Just a Fool in Love
How Long Has This Train Been Gone
ALADDIN 3049 (February 1950)
Johnson Rag
Walking Blues
ALADDIN 3056 (April 1950)
Square Dance Boogie
Anybody's Blues
ALADDIN 3058 (April 1950)
Birmingham Bounce
I Love Her

Amos Milburn
ALADDIN 3059 (May 1950)
Hard Luck Blues
Two Years of Torture

Amos Milburn and His Aladdin Chicken-Shackers
ALADDIN 3064 (August 1950)
Sax Shack Boogie
Remember
ALADDIN 3068 (October 1950)
Bad, Bad Whiskey
I'm Going to Tell My Mama
ALADDIN 3080 (March 1951)
Tears, Tears, Tears
Let's Rock a While
ALADDIN 3093 (July 1951)
Just One More Drink
Ain't Nothing Shaking
ALADDIN 3105 (October 1951)
She's Gone Again
Boogie-Woogie
ALADDIN 3124 (January 1952)
Trouble in Mind
Thinking and Drinking
ALADDIN 3125 (March 1952)
Put Something in My Hand
Flying Home
ALADDIN 3133 (May 1952)
Roll, Mr. Jelly
I Won't Be a Fool Any More
ALADDIN 3146 (August 1952)
Button Your Lip
Everything I Do Is Wrong
ALADDIN 3150 (September 1952)
Greyhound
Kiss Me Again
ALADDIN 3159 (November 1952)
Rock, Rock, Rock
Boo Hoo
ALADDIN 3164 (January 1953)
Let Me Go Home, Whiskey
Three Times a Fool
ALADDIN 3168 (May 1953)
Long, Long Day
Please, Mr. Johnson
ALADDIN 3197 (August 1953)
One Scotch, One Bourbon, One Beer
What Can I Do?
ALADDIN 3218 (November 1953)
Good, Good Whiskey
Let's Have a Party
ALADDIN 3226 (February 1954)
Rocky Mountain
How Could You Hurt Me So
ALADDIN 3240 (April 1954)
Milk and Water
I'm Still a Fool for You
ALADDIN 3248 (June 1954)
Baby, Baby All the Time
Glory of Love

ALADDIN 3253 (September 1954)
Vicious, Vicious Vodka
I Done Done It
ALADDIN 3269 (November 1954)
One, Two, Three, Everybody
That's It
ALADDIN 3281 (February 1955)
Why Don't You Do Right
I Love You Anyway
ALADDIN 3293 (August 1955)
All Is Well
My Happiness Depends on You
ALADDIN 3306 (November 1955)
House Party
I Guess I'll Go
ALADDIN 3320 (May 1956)
French Fried Potatoes and Ketchup
I Need Someone
ALADDIN 3332 (August 1956)
Juice, Juice, Juice
Chicken Shack Boogie

The Amos Milburn Band
ALADDIN 3340 (October 1956)
Every Day of the Week
Girl of My Dreams

Albums

ALADDIN 703 (June 1952)
Party After Hours (10-inch LP; three cuts by Milburn)
ALADDIN 704 (June 1952)
Rockin' the Boogie (10-inch LP)
ALADDIN 710 (July 1956)
Rock 'n' Roll with Rhythm & Blues (12-inch LP; two cuts by Milburn)
ALADDIN 810 (1956)
Rockin' the Boogie (12-inch LP)
ALADDIN 813 (1956)
Party After Hours (12-inch LP; five cuts by Milburn)
SCORE 4002 (1957)
I Dig Rock & Roll (two cuts by Milburn)
SCORE 4012 (1958)
Let's Have a Party

Ming and Ling

Ming and Ling
MAJESTIC 1172 (September 1947)
No-Tickee Boogie
Rice Paddy Daddy
CAROUSEL 109 (June 1949)
Eggroll Eatin' Mama
Yat Gaw Mien Boogie
DeLUXE 3314 (October 1950)
Milkcow Blues Boogie
Love in Bloom

Merrill Moore

CAPITOL 2226 (September 1952)
Corrine, Corrina
Bed Bug Boogie
CAPITOL 2386 (February 1953)
Red Light
Bartender's Blues
CAPITOL 2574 (August 1953)
The House of Blue Lights
Bell Bottom Boogie
CAPITOL 2691 (December 1953)
Snatchin' and Grabbin'

Sweet Jennie Lee
CAPITOL 2796 (April 1954)
Nola
Fly Right Boogie
CAPITOL 2924 (September 1954)
Doggie House Boogie
Ten, Ten A.M.
CAPITOL 3034 (January 1955)
Rock Rockola
Cow Cow Boogie
CAPITOL 3140 (May 1955)
Yes, Indeed
One Way Door
CAPITOL 32226 (September 1955)
Hard Top Race
Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue
CAPITOL 3311 (December 1955)
Cooing to the Wrong Pigeon
Down the Road Apiece
CAPITOL 3397 (March 1956)
Rock Island Line
King Porter Stomp
CAPITOL 3563 (September 1956)
Gotta Gimme What'cha Got
She's Gone

Ella Mae Morse

The Freddie Slack Orchestra
CAPITOL 102 (July 1942)
Cow-Cow Boogie
[reverse; Slack without Morse]
CAPITOL 115 (October 1942)
Mister Five by Five
The Thrill Is gone
CAPITOL 133 (September 1943)
Old Rob Roy
Get on Board, Little Children

Ella Mae Morse
CAPITOL 143 (December 1943)
Shoo-Shoo, Baby
No Love, No Nothin'
CAPITOL 151 (April 1944)
Milkman, Keep Those Bottles Quiet
Tess' Torch Song
CAPITOL 163 (August 1944)
Invitation to the Party
Patty-Cake Man
CAPITOL 176 (December 1944)
Why Shouldn't I?
Hello, Suzanne
CAPITOL 193 (May 1945)
Captain Kidd
You Betcha
CAPITOL 226 (November 1945)
Rip Van Winkle
Buzz Me
CAPITOL 251 (April 1946)
The House of Blue Lights
Hey, Mr. Postman
CAPITOL 278 (June 1946)
Pig Foot Pete
Your Conscience Tells You So
CAPITOL 301 (September 1946)
That's My Home
The Merry Ha! Ha!
CAPITOL 370 (February 1947)
Hoodle Addle
Pine Top Schwartz
CAPITOL 424 (May 1947)
Get Off It and Go
Old Shank's Mare
CAPITOL 487 (December 1947)
On the Sunny Side of the Street
Early in the Morning
CAPITOL 15097 (May 1948)
A Little Farther Down the Road a Piece

Bombo B, Bailey
CAPITOL 15188 (September 1948)
Cow-Cow Boogie [reissue of Capitol 102]
The House of Blue Lights [reissue of Capitol 251]
CAPITOL 1903 (December 1951)
Tennessee Saturday Night
Sensational
CAPITOL 1922 (January 1952)
The Blacksmith Blues
Love Me or Leave Me
CAPITOL 2072 (April 1952)
Oakie Boogie
Love Ya Like Mad
CAPITOL 1286 (July 1952)
A-Sleepin' at the Foot and the Bed
Male Call

Tennessee Ernie Ford and Ella Mae Morse
CAPITOL 2215 (August 1952)
I'm Hog-Tied Over You
False-Hearted Girl

Ella Mae Morse
CAPITOL 2276 (September 1952)
Greyhound
Jump Back, Honey
CAPITOL 2346 (January 1953)
The Guy Who Invented Kissin' Good
CAPITOL 2441 (March 1953)
Big Mamou
Is It Any Wonder
CAPITOL 2539 (July 1953)
40 Cups of Coffee
Oh! You Crazy Moon
CAPITOL 2658 (November 1953)
Taint What You Do It's the Way that Cha Do It
It Ain't Necessarily So
CAPITOL 2800 (April 1954)
Goodnight, Sweetheart, Goodnight
Happy Habit
CAPITOL 2882 (July 1954)
Money Honey
I Love You, Yes I Do
CAPITOL 2959 (October 1954)
(We've Reached) The Point of No Return
Give a Little Time
CAPITOL 2992 (November 1954)
Bring My Baby Back to Me
Lovey Dovey
CAPITOL 3105 (April 1955)
Smack Dab in the Middle
Yes, Yes I Do
CAPITOL 3147 (June 1955)
Heart Full of Hope
Livin', Livin', Livin'
CAPITOL 3199 (July 1955)
Razzle Dazzle
Seventeen
CAPITOL 3263 (October 1955)
Sing-ing-ing-ing
When Boy Kiss Girl (It's Love)
CAPITOL 3387 (February 1956)
Rock and Roll Wedding
Down in Mexico
CAPITOL 3458 (June 1956)
I'm Gonna Walk
Coffee Date

Albums

CAPITOL H-513 (July 1954)
Barrelhouse, Boogie, and the Blues (10-inch LP)

CAPITOL T-513 (January 1955)
Barrelhouse, Boogie, and the Blues (12-inch LP)
CAPITOL T-898 (October 1957)
The Morse Code
Capitol also issued a *Barrelhouse, Boogie, and the Blues* 45-rpm EP set in July 1954 (EAP-1-513 and EAP-2-513).

Louis Prima

A 1933 Bluebird recording by David Rose on which Prima played trumpet is not included here, nor are the noncommercial V-Disc recordings Prima made for the armed forces in 1944–45. A debt is here owed, by all who walk upright, to the work of Robert Pepitone, who, alone among men, has dedicated himself to the chronicling of Louis Prima's career.

The Hotcha Trio
BLUEBIRD 5296 (November 1933)
Chinatown, My Chinatown
Dinah

Louis Prima and His New Orleans Gang
BRUNSWICK 7320 (December 1934)
I Still Want You
(Looks Like I'm) Breakin' the Ice
BRUNSWICK 7335 (January 1935)
Long About Midnight
Star Dust
BRUNSWICK 7376 (February 1935)
House Rent Party Day
Bright Eyes
BRUNSWICK 7394 (March 1935)
Sing It 'Way Low Down
Let's Have a Jubilee
BRUNSWICK 7419 (April 1935)
Put on an Old Pair of Shoes
I'm Livin' in a Great Big Way
BRUNSWICK 7431 (May 1935)
Swing Me with Rhythm
Sugar Is Sweet and So Are You
BRUNSWICK 7448 (June 1935)
The Lady in Red
Chasing Shadows
BRUNSWICK 7456 (June 1935)
Chinatown, My Chinatown
Basin Street Blues
BRUNSWICK 7471 (July 1935)
It's the Rhythm in Me
Worry Blues
BRUNSWICK 7479 (July 1935)
In a Little Gypsy Tea Room
Let's Swing It
BRUNSWICK 7499 (October 1935)
Weather Man
Plain Old Me
BRUNSWICK 7524 (November 1935)
That's Where the South Begins
Jamaica Shout
BRUNSWICK 7531 (November 1935)
How'm I Doin'? (Hey-Hey)
Solitude
BRUNSWICK 7586 (December 1935)
I'm Shooting High

I've Got My Fingers Crossed
BRUNSWICK 7596 (January 1936)
Sweet Sue
I Love You Truly
BRUNSWICK 7628 (March 1936)
Sing, Sing, Sing
It's Been So Long
BRUNSWICK 7657 (April 1936)
At the Darktown Strutters' Ball
Alice Blue Gown
BRUNSWICK 7666 (May 1936)
Dinah
Lazy River
BRUNSWICK 7680 (June 1936)
Cross Patch
Swing Me a Lullaby
BRUNSWICK 7709 (July 1936)
Confessin'
Let's Have Fun
BRUNSWICK 7740 (September 1936)
Let's Get Together and Swing
The Stars Know (I'm in Love with You)

Louis Prima
VOCALION 3376 (December 1936)
Pennies from Heaven
What Will Santa Claus Say?
VOCALION 3388 (January 1937)
Mr. Ghost Goes to Town
The Goose Hangs High
VOCALION 3509 (April 1937)
Fifty-second Street
The Love Bug Will Bite You
VOCALION 3628 (August 1937)
Danger, Love at Work
Afraid to Dream
VOCALION 3657 (September 1937)
You Can't Have Everything
Tin Roof Blues
VOCALION 3921 (January 1938)
I Just Can't Believe You're Gone
Rhythm on the Radio
DECCA 1618 (February 1938)
Yes, There Ain't No Moonlight (So What)
Rosalie
DECCA 1674 (March 1938)
Now They Call It Swing
Where Have We Met Before?
DECCA 1871 (June 1938)
You Call It Madness (but I Call it Love)
Nothing's Too Good for You
DECCA 1953 (August 1938)
Why Should I Pretend?
Doin' the Serpentine
DECCA 2242 (January 1939)
Jitterbugs on Parade
Show Me the Way to Go Home
DECCA 2279 (February 1939)
Now and Then
Exactly Like You
DECCA 2660 (August 1939)
A Good Man Is Hard to Find
If I Could Be with You One Hour Tonight
DECCA 2749 (October 1939)
Sweet and Low Down
Of Thee I Sing

Louis Prima and His Gleeby Rhythm Orchestra
VARSITY 8166 (January 1940)
Gleeby Rhythm Is Born
Sing-a-Spell
VARSITY 8170 (February 1940)
To You Sweetheart, Aloha

Say "Si Si"
VARSITY 8245 (April 1940)
Look Out
Dance with a Dolly (with a Hole in Her Stocking)
VARSITY 8247 (May 1940)
Percy, Have Mercy
Daydreams Come True at Night

Louis Prima and His Orchestra
OKEH 6520 (January 1942)
Tica-Tee, Tica-Ta
Forgive Me

Louis Prima
HIT 7082 (January 1944)
Is My Baby Blue Tonight
I'll Be Seeing You
HIT 7083 (February 1944)
Robin Hood [instrumental version]
I'll Walk Alone [vocal: Lily Ann Carol]
HIT 7083 (February 1944)
Robin Hood
I'll Walk Alone [same as above]
HIT 7095 (May 1944)
Louise
There's a Lot of Moonlight Being Wasted [vocal: Carol]
HIT 7096 (June 1944)
Kentucky
A Fellow on a Furlough [vocal: Carol]
HIT 7106 (October 1944)
Angelina
Oh, Marie [vocal: Carol]
HIT 7107 (October 1944)
Dance with a Dolly
Beloved [vocal: Carol]
HIT 7109 (November 1944)
The White Cliffs of Dover
The Very Thought of You
HIT 7117 (December 1944)
I'm Confessin' (That I Love You)
This Heart of Mine [vocal: Carol]
HIT 7118 (December 1944)
Let's Take the Long Way Home [vocal: Carol]
A Little on the Lonely Side
HIT 7123 (January 1945)
I Want to Go to Tokio
I Wonder
HIT 7124 (January 1945)
What's the Matter Marie
Hitsum-Kitsum-Bumpity-Itsum [with Carol]
HIT 7125 (January 1945)
Rum and Coca-Cola [vocal: Carol]
I Wanna Get Married [vocal: Carol]
MAJESTIC 7083 (January 1945) [reissue of Hit 7083]
Robin Hood
I'll Walk Alone
MAJESTIC 7106 (January 1945) [reissue of Hit 7106]
Angelina
Oh, Marie
HIT 7128 (February 1945)
The Blizzard
My Dreams Are Getting Better All the Time
MAJESTIC 7134 (May 1945)
Caldonia
Bell-Bottom Trousers [with Carol]
MAJESTIC 7135 (May 1945)
Please No Squeeza da Banana
I Was Here When You Left Me (I'll Be Here When You Get Back) [vocal: Carol]

MAJESTIC 7140 (June 1945)
Sentimental Journey [vocal: Carol]
There! I've Said It Again [vocal: Carol]
MAJESTIC 7141 (June 1945)
Brooklyn Boogie
I Don't Want to Be Loved [vocal: Carol]
MAJESTIC 7145 (July 1945)
On the Atcheson, Topeka and Santa Fe [vocal: Carol]
How Deep Is the Ocean [vocal: Carol]
MAJESTIC 7151 (August 1945)
You Gotta See Baby Tonight
Who Threw the Whiskey in the Well?
MAJESTIC 1016 (August 1945)
Robin Hood [reissue of Hit 7083]
Angelina [reissue of Hit 7106]
MAJESTIC 7154 (September 1945)
The White Cliffs of Dover [reissue of Hit 7109]
Felicia No Capicia
MAJESTIC 7156 (October 1945)
Just a Little Fond Affection [vocal: Carol]
Waitin' for the Train to Come In
MAJESTIC 7159 (November 1945)
Way Down Yonder in New Orleans
As Mr. Mason Said to Mr. Dixon
MAJESTIC 7163 (December 1945)
Some Sunday Morning
Everybody Knew but Me [vocal: Carol]
MAJESTIC 1029 (January 1946)
Brooklyn Boogie [reissue of Majestic 7141]
You Won't Be Satisfied [reissue of Majestic 7144]
MAJESTIC 7172 (January 1946)
Gimme a Little Kiss (Will "Ya" Huh?)
Where Did You Learn to Love? [vocal: Jack Powers]
MAJESTIC 1037 (February 1946)
It Takes a Long Tall Brown Skin Gal (to Make a Preacher Lay His Bible Down)
St. Louis Blues
MAJESTIC 7177 (February 1946)
The Gypsy [vocal: Powers]
Baby, Won't You Please Come Home [with Carol]
MAJESTIC 7179 (March 1946)
Pickle in the Middle (and the Mustard on Top)
Come Rain or Come Shine [vocal: Powers]
MAJESTIC 1044 (May 1946)
Josephine, Please No Lean on the Bell
Hey! Ba-Ba-Re-Bop!
MAJESTIC 1050 (June 1946)
The Lip [vocal: Carol]
I'll Be with You in Apple Blossom Time [vocal: Carol and Powers]
MAJESTIC 1051 (July 1946)
Boogie in Chicago
Porgy [vocal: Carol]
MAJESTIC 1052 (July 1946)
Angelina [reissue of Hit 7106]
Little Boy Blew His Top
MAJESTIC 7191 (August 1946)
Whatta Ya Gonna Do! [vocal: Powers]
The Coffee Song
MAJESTIC 7200 (October 1946)
You Call It Madness (but I Call It Love) [vocal: Powers]
I Can't Give You Anything but Love

Louis Prima with Foy Willing and the Riders of the Purple Sage

MAJESTIC 5003 (October 1946)
Vout Cowboy
Mary Lou

Louis Prima

MAJESTIC 1076 (October 1946)
A Flea and a Fly in a Flue [with the Tune Timers]
Nosy-Body [with Judy Lynn]
MAJESTIC 1087 (November 1946)
He Like It! She Like It!
A Gal in Calico
MAJESTIC 1100 (December 1946)
Marguerita
Bridget O'Brien [with the Tune Timers]
MAJESTIC 1107 (January 1947)
The Anniversary Song
That's How Much I Love You
MAJESTIC 1113 (February 1947)
A Nickel for a Memory [vocal: Powers]
A Sunday Kind of Love
MAJESTIC 1116 (February 1947)
Baciagaloop (Makes Love on the Stoop)
Just a Gigolo
MAJESTIC 1131 (March 1947)
Chinatown, My Chinatown
Sing, Sing, Sing
MAJESTIC 1133 (April 1947)
Mahzel (Means Good Luck) [with Cathy Allen]
Chi-Baba Chi-Baba [with Cathy Allen]
MAJESTIC 1145 (May 1947)
There's That Lonely Feeling Again [vocal: Allen]
Cecilia [vocal: Allen]
MAJESTIC 1157 (June 1947)
Do a Little Business on the Side
Maria Mia [vocal: Powers]
RCA-VICTOR 20-2400 (August 1947)
Civilization (Bongo, Bongo, Bongo)
Forsaking All Others [with Allen]
RCA-VICTOR 20-2401 (August 1947)
Fun and Fancy Free
Say It with a Slap
RCA-VICTOR 20-2477 (September 1947)
I'll Never Make the Same Mistake Again
You Can't Tell the Depth of the Well
RCA-VICTOR 20-2515 (October 1947)
With a Hey and a Hi and a Ho Ho Ho
My Flame Went Out Last Night
RCA-VICTOR 20-2549 (November 1947)
My Little Donkey
Valencia
RCA-VICTOR 20-2609 (December 1947)
Too Fat Polka
If I Only Had a Match [with Allen]
RCA-VICTOR 20-2619 (December 1947)
The Thousand Island Song (Oh Florence)
I'm Living a Lie [with Allen]
RCA-VICTOR 20-2711 (February 1948)

The Bee Song
Tutti Tutti Pizzicato
RCA-VICTOR 20-2763 (March 1948)
I Feel So Smoochie
Betty Blue
RCA-VICTOR 20-2982 (June 1948)
The Sad Cowboy
Bubble-Loo Bubble-Loo [with Allen]
RCA-VICTOR 20-3034 (August 1948)
All of Me
Sweet Nothings [vocal: Allen]
RCA-VICTOR 20-3079 (August 1948)
Love That Boy! [vocal: Allen]
Lillian
RCA-VICTOR 20-3098 (October 1948)
That Certain Party
Anywhere in Texas R.F.D.
RCA-VICTOR 20-3229 (November 1948)
California Is Wonderful (If You're a Grapefruit)
Mean to Me
RCA-VICTOR 20-3276 (December 1948)
Anticipation without Realization
Everybody's Friend but Nobody's Sweetheart [with Allen]
RCA-VICTOR 20-3410 (March 1949)
It's a Cruel, Cruel World
All Right, Louie, Drop the Gun
MERCURY 5218 (April 1949)
Hi Ho Trailus Bootwhip
I'll Walk Alone [reissue of Majestic 7083]
RCA-VICTOR 20-3494 (June 1949)
Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue [with Keely Smith]
For Mari-Yootch (I Walka da Pooch)
Note: the above record was also released as Prima's first 45-rpm single, RCA-Victor 47-2906.
VARSITY 161 (August 1949)
Baciagaloop [reissue of Majestic 1116]
Angelina [reissue of Hit 7106]
VARSITY 162 (August 1949)
Oh, Marie [reissue of Hit 7106]
Josephina, Please No Lean on the Bell [reissue of Majestic 1044]
VARSITY 163 (August 1949)
Please No Squeeza da Banana [reissue of Majestic 7135]
Felicia No Capicia [reissue of Majestic 7154]
VARSITY 164 (August 1949)
Chinatown, My Chinatown [reissue of Majestic 1131]
The Anniversary Song [reissue of Majestic 1107]
MERCURY 5338 (October 1949)
Charley, My Boy [with Smith]
Yes, We Have No Bananas
MERCURY 5339 (October 1949)
I Beeped When I Should Have Bopped
The Manuelo Tarantel
MERCURY 5356 (December 1949)
Charleston
Ja-Da
MERCURY 5361 (January 1950)
Enjoy Yourself [with Smith]

I Ain't Gonna Take It Settin' Down [with Smith]
MERCURY 5386 (March 1950)
Tears on My Tie [with Smith]
Over the Rainbow
MERCURY 5406 (May 1950)
A Good Time Was Had by All
Francis (the Talking Mule)
MERCURY 5451 (July 1950)
Buona Sera (Good Night) [with Smith]
Here Pretty Kitty [with Smith]
VARSITY 45125 (1950)
Robin Hood [45-rpm reissue of Hit 7083]
Brooklyn Boogie [same as Majestic 7141]
ROBIN HOOD 100 (September 1950)
Angelina
Robin Hood
ROBIN HOOD 101 (October 1950)
Oh, Babe! [with Smith]
Piccolina Lena
ROBIN HOOD 105 (December 1950)
Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! [with Smith]
There's That Lonely Feeling Again [vocal: Smith]
ROBIN HOOD 106 (December 1950)
Good-Boogdi-Googi
Zooma Zooma Bacalla [with Smith]
ROBIN HOOD 108 (January 1951)
Pizza and Beer
I Love to Dance the Polka
ROBIN HOOD 111 (March 1951)
Come On-a My House
Bring Fort De-Light
COLUMBIA 39614 (November 1951)
Eleanor
Shake Hands with Santa Claus
COLUMBIA 39692 (March 1952)
Ooh-Dahdily-Dan
Basta
COLUMBIA 39735 (May 1952)
The Bigger the Figure
Boney Bones
COLUMBIA 39823 (July 1952)
One Mint Julep
Chili Sauce
COLUMBIA 39969 (February 1953)
Oh, Marie
Luigi
COLUMBIA 40015 (June 1953)
Paul Revere
It's Good as New (I Painted It Blue)
COLUMBIA 40064 (August 1953)
Barnacle Bill the Sailor [with Smith]
Shepherd Boy [with Smith]
JUBILEE 6054 (November 1953)
Man Dig That Crazy Chick
Non Cha Shame
EQUITY 1000 (November 1953)
Take a Little Walk Around the Block [with Smith]
Oh Goomadi
EQUITY 1001 (December 1953)
Darktown Strutter's Ball
My Conchetta
DECCA 29128 (May 1954)
The Happy Wanderer
Until Sunrise [with Smith]

DECCA 29162 (June 1954)
Paper Doll
The Dummy Song
CAPITOL 3566 (October 1956)
5 Months, 2 Weeks, 2 Days
Banana Split for My Baby
CAPITOL 3615 (December 1956)
Whistle Stop
Be Mine (Little Babe)

Albums

MAJESTIC M-3 (April 1946) [78-rpm album]
Louis Prima
MERCURY 25142 (April 1953) [10-inch LP]
Louis Prima Plays
CAPITOL 755 (September 1956)
The Wildest
CAPITOL 836 (April 1957)
Call of the Wildest
CAPITOL 908 (November 1957)
The Wildest Show at Tahoe
CAPITOL 1010 (July 1958)
Las Vegas Prima Style
COLUMBIA CL-1206 (1958)
Breakin' It Up

Capitol also issued a 45-rpm three-EP set of *The Wildest* (EAP-755), as well as EPs of *The Call of the Wildest* (EAP-1-836) and *The Wildest Show at Tahoe* (EAP-1-908 and EAP-2-908). An EP of Varsity reissues of Hit and Majestic recordings was released as *Italian American Songs* by Royal (EP-172).

Esau Smith

Jesse Garon Presley, the pseudonymous Esau Smith, is not to be confused with the Esau Smith who recorded several mundane country records for the Snope-Tone label in 1952.

Jesse Presley with Jo-Jo Fineaux and His Hattiesburg Hepcats
FURNITURE FROLIC 107 (June 1954)
Bosom Divine
God's Bar-B-Q

Esau Smith
JOE'S RECORDS 220 (July 1955)
My Gal Shaves
Combinate That Number, Jack

Jesse Stone

Jesse Stone and His Band
RCA-VICTOR 20-2554 (November 1947)
Hey, Sister Lucy
An Ace in the Hole
RCA-VICTOR 20-2788 (June 1948)
Who Killed 'Er?
Mister Jelly Fingers
RCA-VICTOR 20-2988 (August 1948)
Don't Let It Get Away

The Donkey and the Elephant
RCA-VICTOR 20-3127 (December 1948)
Who's Zat?
Bling-a-Ling-a-Ling
RCA-VICTOR 20-3282 (January 1949)
Get It While You Can
Keep Your Big Mouth Shut
RCA-VICTOR 50-0026 (June 1949)
Cole Slaw
Do It Now!

Jesse Stone
ATLANTIC 1028 (March 1954)
Oh, That'll Be Joyful
Runaway

The Charlie Calhoun Orchestra
MGM 11989 (April 1955)
Smack Dab in the Middle
(I Don't Know Why) The Car Won't Go

Jesse Stone and His Houserockers
ATCO 6051 (August 1955)
Night Life
The Rocket

Charles Calhoun
GROOVE 0149 (April 1956)
Jamboree
My Pigeon's Gone

Chuck Calhoun
ATLANTIC 1120 (December 1956)
Hey Tiger
Barrel House

Albums

ATLANTIC 8013 (November 1957)
Dance the Rock & Roll (two cuts by Stone)
ATCO 103 (November 1958)
Rock & Roll (one cut by Stone)

The Treniers

The first three records listed, by Lunceford, Bigard, and Mingus, feature Claude Trenier as vocalist. The 1949 Coral record, featuring Claude and Cliff Trenier, had been cut for Decca in early 1945 but was unissued by that label.

Jimmie Lunceford and His Orchestra
DECCA 18655 (February 1945)
I'm Gonna See My Baby
That Someone Must Be You

The Barney Bigard Quintet
LAMPLIGHTER 102 (1946)
[also Crystalette 619]
Young Man's Blues, Part 1
Young Man's Blues, Part 2

Charlie Mingus and His Orchestra
EXCELSIOR 163 (1946)
Weird Nightmare
[reverse: without Trenier]

The Trenier Twins
MERCURY 8045 (June 1947)
Buzz Buzz Buzz
Sure Had a Wonderful Time Last Night
MERCURY 8058 (October 1947)
I Miss You So
Hey Sister Lucy
MERCURY 8071 (January 1948)
No Baby No
Oh Looka There—Ain't She Pretty
MERCURY 8078 (March 1948)
Ain't She Mean
It's a Quiet Town in Crossbone County
MERCURY 8089 (June 1948)
My Convertible Cadillac
Sometimes I'm Happy
MERCURY 8089 (November 1948)
My Convertible Cadillac [same as above]
Near to Me

Jimmie Lunceford and His Orchestra
CORAL 60041 (January 1949)
Buzz Buzz Buzz
[reverse: without Treniers]

The Trenier Twins
LONDON 17007 (February 1950)
Everybody Get Together
Why Did You Get So High, Shorty

The Treniers
OKEH 6804 (June 1951)
Go! Go! Go!
Plenty of Money
OKEH 6826 (September 1951)
Hey Little Girl
Old Woman Blues
OKEH 6853 (January 1952)
It Rocks, It Rolls, It Swings
Taxi Blues
OKEH 6876 (April 1952)
Hadacol, That's All
Long Distance Blues
OKEH 6904 (September 1952)
Rockin' on Sunday Night
Cheatin' on Me
OKEH 6932 (November 1952)
Hi-Yo, Silver
Poon-Tang!
OKEH 6937 (December 1952)
The Moondog
Poon-Tang! [same as above]

Milt Trenier and His Solid Six
RCA-VICTOR 47-5275 (March 1953)
Squeeze Me
Rock Bottom

The Treniers
OKEH 6960 (April 1953)
Rockin' Is Our Business
Sugar Doo
OKEH 6984 (July 1953)
I Do Nothin' but Grieve
This Is It

Milt Trenier and His Solid Six
RCA-VICTOR 47-5487 (October 1953)
You're Killin' Me
Flip Our Wigs

The Treniers
OKEH 7012 (February 1954)

You Know Yeah, Tiger
Bud Dance
OKEH 7023 (March 1954)
Rock-a-Beatin' Boogie
Trapped

Milt Trenier
GROOVE 0008 (March 1954)
Straighten Up, Baby
Why?
GROOVE 0028 (June 1954)
Day Old Bread
Give a Little Time

The Treniers
OKEH 7035 (July 1954)
Bald Head
Come On, Let's Face It
OKEH 7050 (January 1955)
Get Out the Cow
Who Put the "Ongh" in the Mambo?
OKEH 7057 (June 1955)
Devil's Mambo
Do Do Do
EPIC 9066 (August 1954)
Say Hey [with Willie Mays]
Out of the Bushes
EPIC 9127 (October 1955)
Doin' 'Em Up
Go! Go! Go!
EPIC 9144 (January 1956)
Rock 'n' Roll Call
Day Old Bread and Canned Beans
EPIC 9162 (April 1956)
Good Rockin' Tonight
Boodie Green
VIK 0214 (June 1956)
Sorrentino
Lover Come Back to Me
VIK 0227 (September 1956)
Cool It Baby
Rock 'n' Roll Permanent

Album

EPIC LN-3125 (May 1955)
The Treniers on TV

Joe Turner

Joe Turner and Pete Johnson
VOCALION 4607 (January 1939)
Roll 'Em Pete
Goin' Away Blues

Pete Johnson and His Boogie Woogie Boys
VOCALION 4997 (1939)
Cherry Red
Baby, Look at You
VOCALION 5186 (1939)
Lovin' Mama Blues
Cafe Society Rag

The Varsity Seven
VARSITY 8173 (1940)
Shake It and Break It
How Long, How Long Blues

Joe Sullivan and His Cafe´ Society Orchestra
VOCALION 5496 (1940)
I Can't Give You Anything but Love
[reverse: without Turner]
VOCALION 5531 (1940)
Low Down Dirty Shame
[reverse: without Turner]

Benny Carter and His All-Star Orchestra
OKEH 6001 (1940)
Joe Turner Blues
Beale Street Blues

Big Joe Turner
DECCA 7824 (January 1941)
Doggin' the Dog
Rainy Day Blues
DECCA 7827 (February 1941)
Careless Love
Jumpin' Down Blues

Art Tatum and His Band
DECCA 8526 (February 1941)
Wee Baby Blues
[reverse: without Turner]
DECCA 8536 (March 1941)
Last Goodbye Blues
[reverse: without Turner]
DECCA 8563 (June 1941)
Corrine, Corrina
Lonesome Graveyard
DECCA 8577 (July 1941)
Rock Me, Mama
Lucille

Big Joe Turner
DECCA 7856 (September 1941)
Ice Man
Somebody's Got to Go
DECCA 7868 (October 1941)
Nobody in Mind
Chewed Up Grass

Big Joe Turner with the Freddie Slack Trio
DECCA 4093 (December 1941)
Rocks in My Bed
Goin' to Chicago

Big Joe Turner
DECCA 7885 (January 1942)
Blues in the Night
Cry Baby Blues

Big Joe Turner with the Freddie Slack Trio
DECCA 7889 (February 1942)
Blues on Central Avenue
Sun Risin' Blues

Joe Turner with Pete Johnson's All Stars
NATIONAL 9010 (February 1945)
S.K. Blues, I
S.K. Blues, II
NATIONAL 9011 (March 1945)
Watch That Jive
Johnson and Turner Blues

Big Joe Turner
DECCA 11001 (January 1946)
Rebecca
It's the Same Old Story

Joe Turner with Bill Moore's Lucky Seven Band
NATIONAL 4002 (May 1946)
My Gal's a Jockey
I Got Love for Sale
NATIONAL 4009 (August 1946)
Sunday Morning Blues
Mad Blues

Joe Turner
NATIONAL 4011 (December 1946)
Miss Brown's Blues
I'm Sharp When I Hit the Coast

NATIONAL 4016 (April 1947)
Sally Zu-Zazz
Rock o' Gibralter Blues
SAVOY 649 (April 1947) [reissue of Varsity 8173]
Shake It and Break It
How Long, How Long Blues
DECCA 48042 (August 1947)
I Got a Gal for Every Day in the Week
Little Bitty Gal's Blues

Big Vernon
STAG 508 (c. 1947–48)
Around the Clock Blues, I
Around the Clock Blues, II

Joe Turner
NATIONAL 4017 (April 1948)
That's What Really Hurts
Whistle Stop Blues
MGM 10274 (September 1948)
Mardi Gras Boogie
My Heart Belongs to You
ALADDIN 3013 (October 1948)
Low Down Dog
Morning Glory
MGM 10321 (November 1948)
Messin' Around
So Many Women Blues

Joe Turner with the Flennoy Trio
EXCELSIOR 533 (January 1949)
I Don't Dig It
[reverse: Flennoy Trio without Turner]
EXCELSIOR 534 (January 1949)
Oo-Ough Stomp
[reverse: Flennoy Trio without Turner]

Joe Turner with Pete Johnson and His Orchestra
SWING TIME 151 (March 1949)
[also: Down Beat 151]
Radar Blues
Trouble Blues
SWING TIME 152 (March 1949)
[also: Down Beat 152]
Wine-O-Baby Boogie
B&O Blues
SWING TIME 153 (March 1949)
[also: Down Beat 153]
Christmas Date Boogie
Tell Me, Pretty Baby
SWING TIME 154 (March 1949)
[also: Down Beat 154]
Old Piney Brown Is Gone
Baby, Won't You Marry Me

Joe Turner
MGM 10397 (April 1949)
I Don't Dig It
Rainy Weather Blues

Joe Turner with Pete Johnson and His Orchestra
SWING TIME 168 (June 1949)
Skidrow Boogie
Half Tight Boogie
SWING TIME 169 (June 1949)
Rocket Boogie "88" - Part I
Rocket Boogie "88" - Part II

Joe Turner
MGM 10492 (July 1949)
Boogie Woogie Baby
Married Woman Blues
MODERN 691 (August 1949)
Don't Talk Me to Death
High Tower Drive

CORAL 65004 (December 1949) [reissue of Decca 7889]
Blues on Central Avenue
Sun Risin' Blues
NATIONAL 9099 (January 1950)
It's a Low Down Dirty Shame
Nobody in Mind
FREEDOM 1531 (January 1950)
Adam Bit the Apple
Still in the Dark
FREEDOM 1537 (May 1950)
Just a Travelin' Man
Life is Like a Card Game
MGM 10719 (June 1950)
Feelin' So Bad
Moody Baby

Joe Turner with Dave Bartholomew's Orchestra
IMPERIAL 5085 (July 1950)
Jumpin' Tonight
Story to Tell
IMPERIAL 5093 (July 1950)
Lucille
Love My Baby

Joe Turner
FREEDOM 1540 (September 1950)
You'll Be Sorry
Feelin' Happy
NATIONAL 9100 (September 1950)
Hollywood Bed
New Oo-Wee Baby Blues
NATIONAL 9106 (October 1950) [reissue of National 4002]
My Gal's a Jockey
Still in the Dark
FREEDOM 1545 (October 1950)
I Want My Baby
Midnight Is Here Again
FREEDOM 1546 (October 1950)
Jumpin' at the Jubilee
Lonely World
ALADDIN 3070 (November 1950)
Back Breaking Blues
Empty Pocket Blues
NATIONAL 9144 (March 1951)
Rocks in My Bed
Howlin' Winds
ATLANTIC 939 (April 1951)
Chains of Love
After My Laughter Came Tears
OKEH 6829 (September 1951)
Cherry Red [reissue of Vocalion 4997]
Joe Turner blues [reissue of Okeh 6001]
RPM 331 (October 1951)
Roll 'Em Boys
Kansas City Blues
ATLANTIC 949 (October 1951)
The Chill Is On
Bump, Miss Susie
SWING TIME 261 (November 1951) [reissue of Down Beat 153]
Christmas Date Boogie
How D'Ya Want Your Rollin' Done
FIDELITY 3000 (November 1951)
Life Is Like a Card Game [reissue of Freedom 1537]
When the Rooster Crows [reissue of Freedom 1545]
SWING TIME 269 (December 1951) [reissue of Swing Time 153]
Christmas Date Boogie
Tell Me, Pretty Baby

DOOTONE 305 (January 1952)
I Love Ya, I Love Ya
Born to Gamble
ATLANTIC 960 (February 1952)
Sweet Sixteen
I'll Never Stop Loving You
RPM 345 (March 1952)
Riding Blues
Playful Baby
FIDELITY 3007 (April 1952)
After While You'll Be Sorry [reissue of Freedom 1540]
Just a Travelin' Man [reissue of Freedom 1537]
BAYOU 015 (1952?)
The Blues Jumped a Rabbit
The Sun Is Shining
COLONY 108 (1952)
Midnight Rocking
Little Bitty Baby
ATLANTIC 970 (May 1952)
Don't You Cry
Poor Lover's Blues
ATLANTIC 982 (December 1952)
Still in Love
Baby, I Still Want You

Joe Turner and Wynonie Harris
ALADDIN 3148 (July 1953)
The Battle of the Blues, Part 1
The Battle of the Blues, Part 2

Joe Turner
ATLANTIC 1001 (August 1953)
Honey Hush
Crawdad Hole
ATLANTIC 1016 (December 1953)
TV Mama
Oke-She-Moke-She-Pop
ATLANTIC 1026 (April 1954)
Shake, Rattle and Roll
You Know I Love You
DOOTONE 341 (June 1954)
When I'm Gone
No, There Ain't No News Today
ATLANTIC 1040 (September 1954)
Well All Right
Married Woman
ATLANTIC 1053 (February 1955)
Flip, Flop and Fly
Ti-Ri-Lee
ATLANTIC 1069 (July 1955)
Hide and Seek
Midnight Cannonball
ATLANTIC 1080 (November 1955)
The Chicken and the Hawk
Morning, Noon and Night
DECCA 29711 (November 1955)
Piney Brown Blues [from Decca album 214]
I Got a Gal for Every Day in the Week [reissue of Decca 48042]
ATLANTIC 1088 (March 1956)
Corrine, Corrina
Boogie Woogie Country Girl
DECCA 29924 (April 1956)
Corrine, Corrina [reissue of Decca 8563]
It's the Same Old Story [reissue of Decca 11001]
ATLANTIC 1100 (June 1956)
Lipstick, Powder and Paint
Rock a While
ATLANTIC 1122 (December 1956)
Midnight Special Train
Feeling Happy

Albums

DECCA 214 (1941)
Kansas City Jazz ("Piney Brown Blues")
COLUMBIA C-44 (1941)
Boogie Woogie (one Cut by Turner and Johnson)
DECCA DL-8044 (March 1953)
Kansas City Jazz (LP reissue of Decca 214)
ATLANTIC 1234 (July 1956)
Boss of the Blues
ATLANTIC 1235 (July 1956)
Kansas City Jazz
ATLANTIC 8001 (1957)
The Greatest Rock & Roll (two cuts by Turner)
ATLANTIC 8005 (May 1957)
Joe Turner
ATLANTIC 8010 (1957)
Rock & Roll Forever (three cuts by Turner)
ATLANTIC 8023 (1958)
Rockin' the Blues
SAVOY 14012 (1958)
Joe Turner
SAVOY 14016 (1958)
Careless Love

Atlantic also issued four Turner EPs: *Joe Turner Sings* (No. 536), *Joe Turner* (Nos. 565 and 586), and *Rock with Joe Turner* (No. 606).

Old Noise, New Plastic

Unsung Heroes on Compact Disc

There was a time, not all that long ago, when, if you wanted to hear this stuff, you had to track down copies of the original 78's and 45's, which usually would be as beat-up as they were hard to find. Then, at first from England and the Continent, then from America and Japan as well, slowly but exhaustively, the stuff came to be reissued in albums. You lost the *frisson* of holding the actual single, beholding the old label, but you were able to hear the music better than before. Now, finally, much of this music is being made available in compact-disc form. Thank God for the Japs and their technology, and for those obsessive foreigners who have become the archival priests of the cult of America. (Even if they can't actually understand the stuff. Reading the transcriptions of American lyrics in some Japanese CD notes can be a pleasant diversion: Muddy Waters's "I'm just as restless, man, as the deep blue sea" becomes "I'm just a resting man of the deep blue sea"; Billie Holiday's "the take is so small" emerges as "the tit gets so small"—but her "Chinks do it, Japs do it" comes out fine.) Eventually, as traditional albums fully go the way of 78s, it all will be available; and—let no purist pull your prick—anyone really wanting to experience this stuff should hear it this way, every refracted note and thunderous blast as clear and full and fine as it was made to be. As that eventuality—inevitability, really—has not yet come, the following listings also include certain reissue LPs of special note.

Johnny Ace

MCA MCAD-31183 (1989)
Memorial Album
Compact-disc reissue of the 1956 Duke album.
RHINO R2 70641 (1989)
Billboard Top R&B Hits—1955
Contains "Pledging My Love." The same recording is also available on other, less interesting anthologies, among them Original Sound Entertainment's *Oldies but Goodies, Vol. 10* (OSCD 8860).

Jackie Brenston

RHINO R2 70962 (1990)
Blue Flames: A Sun Blues Collection
Contains "Rocket '88.'" The same recording is also included in two other CDs: *The Best of Chess Rock 'n' Roll, Vol. 1* (Chess CHD-31319), released in 1988, and the 1989 stiff-movie soundtrack *Great Balls of Fire* (Polydor 839 516-2).

An excellent LP, *Rocket 88,* brought out in 1989 by Green Line of Italy (GCH 8107), contains fourteen of Brenston's Chess recordings, several of them previously unreleased.

Charles Brown

There has been no compact disc of Brown's early recordings yet, but a series of fine Brown LP collections has been issued by the Route 66 and Jukebox Lil labels (sister divisions of the outstanding Mr R&B Records in Vingåker, Sweden): the Route 66 albums *Sunny Road* (KIX-5), released in 1978, and *Race Track Blues* (KIX-17), contain a total of thirty-two recordings from 1945–60; another thirty-five recordings, from 1945–49, are brought together in the 1989 Jukebox Lil albums *This Is One Time, Baby* (JB-1105) and *Sail On Blues* (JB-1106); seventeen more on the 1989 Route 66 album *Let's Have a Ball* (KIX-34); and a previously unreleased mid-fifties version of "Driftin' Blues" is included in the Route 66 collection of post-Brown recordings, 1949–56, by Johnny Moore's Blazers, *Why Johnny Why?* (KIX-33). Collectively, the extensive liner notes of these albums—by Pat Notini, Jim Dawson, Blazers bassist Eddie Williams (as told to Dawson), and Charles Brown himself—offer the most thorough account of Brown's career we are likely ever to have.

Roy Brown

CHARLY CD 37 (England: 1986)
Battle of the Blues
Eleven recordings each by Roy Brown and Wynonie Harris, 1947–59.
KING KCD-607 (1989)
Battle of the Blues
Seven cuts each by Brown and

Wynonie Harris. This CD version of the 1958 LP of the same name is, like all King compact discs, a bat for the money—but a mitigated beat, considering the general unavailability elsewhere of much of this material in compact-disc form.
KING KCD-627 (1989)
Battle of the Blues, Vol. 2
Seven cuts each by Brown and Wynonie Harris. CD version of the 1958 LP.

Worth having as well are the three Brown LPs from Route 66 in Sweden: *Laughing by Crying* (KIX-2; 1977), *Good Rocking Tonight* (KIX-6; 1978), and *I Feel That Young Man's Rhythm* (KIX-26; 1985). The 1982 Mr R&B LP *Saturday Nite* (R&B-104) contains four Brown recordings from 1952–53, thirteen from later years. The 1985 Charly album *Boogie at Midnight* (CRB 1093) contains sixteen Brown recordings from 1947–59, two of them previously unissued; and the two-LP 1976 Gusto reissue of twenty-two King sides, *Hard Luck Blues* (GD-5036X2), can still occasionally be found.

The Clovers

ATLANTIC 7 81293-2 (1985)
Atlantic Rhythm and Blues 1947–1974, Volume 1: 1947–1952
Contains "Don't You Know I Love You," "Fool, Fool, Fool," "One Mint Julep," and "Ting-A-Ling."
ATLANTIC 7 81294-2 (1985)
Atlantic Rhythm and Blues 1947–1974, Volume 2: 1952–1955
Contains "Good Lovin'."
ATLANTIC 7 81295-2 (1985)
Atlantic Rhythm and Blues 1947–1974, Volume 3: 1955–1958
Contains "Devil or Angel" and "Love, Love, Love."

The 1984 British LP *The Clovers: Five Cool Cats* (Edsel ED 126) contains sixteen recordings, 1952–58. *All Righty Oh Sweetie,* a 1989 collection from the Mr. R&B family in Sweden (Dr. Horse H-807), contains thirteen recordings from 1951–55 and six later recordings.

Nat King Cole

LASERLIGHT 15718 (1986)
Nat "King" Cole Trio 1943/49: The Vocal Sides
Eighteen Capitol recordings.
MERCURY 830 967 2 (1987)
The Keynotes with Nat King Cole
Thirteen recordings, made for the Keynote label in 1946, on which Cole played pseudonymously.
SAVOY ZDS 1205 (1989)
Nat King Cole and the King Cole Trio
Twenty-six recordings (14 previously unissued), 1938–39.
CAPITOL CDP 7 93590 2 (1990)
Nat King Cole: Capitol Collector's Series
Twenty recordings, 1943–64, four of which, 1943–46, are by the

King Cole Trio.

Nat King Cole: From the Very Beginning (MCA2-4020), a two-record set released by MCA in 1980, contains the recordings Cole made, on his own and with his brother's group, for Decca, 1936 and 1940–41.

The Dominoes

CHARLY CD 44 (England: 1987)
Have Mercy Baby
Sixteen recordings, 1950–55.
KING KCD-513 (1988)
All-Star Rock 'n' Roll Revue
Contains "Sixty-Minute Man." CD version of a 1956 album.

The King Gusto-series reissue LPs *Billy Ward and the Dominoes* and *The Dominoes Featuring Clyde McPhatter, Vol. 2* (5005X and 5006X) can still be found, as can the reissue of the 1958 album *Clyde McPhatter with Billy Ward and His Dominoes* (King 559).

Cecil Gant

KRAZY KAT KK CD 03 (England: 1989)
Cecil Gant
Twenty Gilt-Edge, Bullet, and Four-Star recordings.

Earlier Gant LP collections from England, such as the fine Flyright album *Rock the Boogie,* are no longer generally available. The Krazy Kat LP *Nashville Jumps: R&B from Bullet, 1946–1957* (KK 783) includes two Gant recordings not found on the CD: "Nashville Jumps" and "Loose as a Goose"; and the 1985 British anthology *Jumpin' the Blues, Vol. 2* (Ace CH 135) contains two sides of a 1951 Decca single, "Rock Little Baby," and "Shot Gun Boogie."

Hardrock Gunter

No compact disc yet (and I wouldn't hold my breath), but the 1950 "Birmingham Bounce" and one other Gunter recording have been included on a Dutch anthology called *The "Island" Recordings* (White Label LP 8814).

Bill Haley

MCA MCAD-5539 (1985)
Bill Haley and His Comets
Twenty Decca recordings.
RHINO R2 70598 (1989)
Billboard's Top Rock 'n' Roll Hits—1955
Contains "(We're Gonna) Rock Around the Clock." The same recording is also available on many other compact-disc collections.
RHINO R2 70599 (1989)
Billboard's Top Rock 'n' Roll Hits—1956
Contains "See You Later, Alligator."

A Haley LP collection from the British Roller Coaster label, *Hillbilly Haley* (Roll 2007), released in 1984, contains fourteen rare

recordings from 1948–51, along with seven from later, less interesting years.

Roy Hall

No compact discs yet, but Charly in England brought together thirteen of Hall's Decca recordings, 1955–56, in the 1984 LP *Diggin' the Boogie* (CR 30227). Both sides of Hall's earliest record, the 1949 Fortune single "Okeé Doaks" and "Dirty Boogie," were reissued by the Esoldun label of France in the 1987 rockabilly anthology *Groovie Boogie Woogie* (RR 2014), while both side of his first Bullet release, "Mule Boogie" and "Old Folks Jamboree," are part of the Dutch anthology *Boogie with a Bullet* (Redita 109).

Wynonie Harris

CHARLY CD 37 (England: 1986)
Battle of the Blues
Eleven recordings each by Wynonie Harris and Roy Brown, 1947–59.
ATLANTIC 7 81696-2 (1986)
Atlantic Blues: Vocalists
Contains Harris's two 1956 Atco recordings.
KING KCD-513 (1988)
All-Star Rock 'n' Roll Revue
Contains "Oh, Babe!" CD version of a 1956 album.
KING KCD-607 (1989)
Battle of the Blues
Seven cuts each by Harris and Roy Brown. CD version of the 1958 LP.
KING KCD-627 (1989)
Battle of the Blues, Vol. 2
Seven cuts each by Harris and Roy Brown. CD version of the 1958 LP.

Outstanding are the three Route 66 LP collections issued in 1977, 1982, and 1986: *Mr. Blues Is Coming to Town* (KIX-3), *Oh Babe!* (KIX-20), and *Playful Baby* (KIX-30). *Here Comes the Blues,* a 1988 anthology from Official (6024), brings together sixteen Harris recordings from 1945–46. The British Krazy Kat album *Nashville Jumps: R&B from Bullet 1946–1957* (KK 783) includes both sides of a 1946 single, "Dig This Boogie" and "Lightnin' Struck the Poor House."

Screamin' Jay Hawkins

EDSEL CD 104 (England: 1989)
Frenzy
Fourteen recordings from 1956–58.
RHINO A 21568 (1990)
Voodoo Jive: The Best of Screamin' Jay Hawkins
Four recordings from 1955–56, including both sides of the rare Mercury single; thirteen from 1957–69.

The LP *I Is* (Official 6062) contains seven of the earliest

Hawkins recordings, 1952–55, and six from 1957–58.

Wanda Jackson

RHINO R2 70975 (1990)

Rockin' in the Country

Nine rockers, 1956–60, plus nine twangers from self-pity city.

There have been some fine LP reissues. All her Decca recordings, 1954–56, have been collected in *Early Wanda Jackson,* brought out in 1983 by Bear Family of Germany (BFX 15109), and the Capitol years are well represented by two collections from Pathé-Marconi of France, *Only Rock 'n' Roll* (2C 150.85334/35), a two-record set released in 1978, and the 1981 *Rockin' with Wanda* (2C 068-82098).

Louis Jordan

MCA MCAD-4079 (1989)

The Best of Louis Jordan

Twenty Decca recordings. CD version of a 1975 two-LP set.

OFFICIAL 80000 (Denmark: 1989)

Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five: Greatest Hits

Twenty-one Decca recordings, 1941–50.

POLYGRAM 838 219-2 (France: 1989)

Louis Jordan Rock and Roll

Twenty-one recordings from 1956–57.

A TOUCH OF MAGIC DATOM-4 (England: 1989)

Live Jive

Seventeen recordings.

There has been no shortage of Jordan LPs. The Decca years, 1938–53, are well represented by *Louis Jordan's Greatest Hits* (MCA-274; a 1980 repackaging of an earlier collection), the 1983 Charly album *Look Out! . . . It's Louis Jordan and the Tympany Five* (CRB 1048), and Jukebox Lil's *G.I. Jive* (JB-602) and *Somebody Done Hoodooed the Hoodo Man* (JB-619). Together the Jukebox Lil albums bring together thirty-two tracks from the years 1938–47. Other Jordan LP collections have come, and continue to come, from far and wide. The sixteen recordings on *Out of Print,* from Official in Denmark (86018), span the years 1939–54. Swing House in England has issued *Good Times,* an album of "live" Jordan recordings from 1943 and 1948.

Jimmie Logsdon

Unsung is not the word.

Skeets McDonald

No compact disc yet, but McDonald's 1958 Capitol album, *Goin' Steady with the Blues,* was reissued in 1981 by Pathé-Marconi of France (2C 068-86307), and sixteen recordings from 1952–58 have been brought together in a

1986 collection, *Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes,* from Bear Family of Germany (BFX 15195). McDonald's Fortune album, *The Tattooed Lady* (LP 3001), can still be found.

Stick McGhee

ATLANTIC 7 81293-2 (1985)
Atlantic Rhythm and Blues 1947–1974, Volume 1: 1947–1952
Contains "Drinkin' Wine Spo-Dee-O-Dee."
ATLANTIC 7 81695-2 (1986)
Atlantic Blues: Guitar
Contains "Tall Pretty Woman," an unissued recording from 1949.
AUDIO-LAB AL-1520 (1990)
Highway of Blues
Eight King recordings by McGhee from 1953–55 (and five by John Lee Hooker); compact-disc reissue of the 1958 album.

Sixteen of McGhee's recordings, 1949–54, were issued in the 1981 LP *Drinkin' Wine Spo-Dee-O-Dee* (IG 401), from the Crown Prince label of Sweden.

The Midnighters

KING KCD-541 (1988)
Their Greatest Hits
Twelve recordings. CD reissue of the 1957 Federal album.
KING KCD-513 (1988)
All-Star Rock 'n' Roll Revue
Contains "Work with Me Annie." CD reissue of a 1956 album.

Amos Milburn

OFFICIAL 86018 (Denmark: 1989)
Greatest Hits
Eighteen recordings from 1947–53.

There have been some fine Milburn LP reissues as well: *Just One More Drink* (1978), *Rock, Rock, Rock* (1982), and *Let's Rock Awhile* (1985) from Route 66 bring together fifty recordings from the years 1946–57 (KIX-7, KIX-21, and KIX-28); another twenty-seven recordings, 1945–56, are brought together in the 1983 Pathé-Marconi albums *Amos Milburn: 13 Unreleased Masters* (154.6701) and *Let's Have a Party* (154.6711).

Ming and Ling

It has been suggested that "Fishy Woman" by Boppin' Johnny Bao and His Roués of Rhythm, a previously unissued Majestic recording included in the 1988 German anthology *Big City Boogie* (Cat 117), is Ling doing business without Ming.

Merrill Moore

No CD action yet for Merrill, and two Ember LP collections from the early seventies are no longer easily found; but a couple of unissued Capitol recordings,

"Saddle Boogie" from 1951 and "Boogie My Blues Away" from 1955, are included on the LP *Rockabilly Originals* from E.M.I. in England (CAPS 1009).

Ella Mae Morse

No compact disc, but Morse's 1955 Capitol album, *Barrelhouse, Boogie, and the Blues,* was reissued in 1983 by Pathé-Marconi of France (154.6721), and *Sensational,* a 1985 collection from Pathé-Marconi (156.5621), contains fourteen Morse recordings, 1951–57.

Louis Prima

COLUMBIA CK 40847 (1987)
The 1930s: The Singers
Contains the 1936 Brunswick recording "Chasin' Rainbows."
CAPITOL CDP 7 91208 2 (1988)
The Hits of Louis & Keely
Nine recordings, 1956–60. A shoddy CD reissue of a 1961 LP (Capitol SM-1531). A beat, especially in light of the subsequent CD collection of Capitol material from Rhino.
SAVOY ZDS 9420 (1989)
Play Pretty for the People
Twenty Hit and Majestic recordings. (The LP version of this collection, Savoy SJL 2264, contains eleven more tracks.)
RHINO R2 70225 (1990)
Zooma Zooma: The Best of Louis Prima
Eighteen Capitol recordings, 1956–58.

Prima's earliest recordings, 1934–38, were reissued in a four-volume LP series, *Louis Prima & His New Orleans Gang,* by the Old Masters label in the seventies (TOM-37, TOM-38, TOM-39, and TOM-62). The Capitol albums *The Wildest Show at Tahoe* (1957) and *Strictly Prima!* (1958) were reissued by Pathé-Marconi of France in 1984 and 1985 (155.2991 and 156.5231). The 1986 album *Jump, Jive an' Wail* (CRB 1116) contains thirteen Capitol recordings from 1956–58, four of which are not included on the Rhino CD. The more obscure vintage Prima albums include: *A Night on 52nd Street* (Kaydee 5), a recording of a September 1939 show at the Hickory House in New York; *Louis Prima & His Big Band* (Golden Era LP-15005), a collection of radio air checks from the forties; *Louis Prima & His Orchestra at the Terrace Room* (Sunbeam SB-227), recorded in Newark, New Jersey, in August 1944; *Bigga Sazeecha for My Baby* (Whoopee 108), a bootleg of eleven lewd private recordings from the early fifties; and *Just a Gigolo* (Bandstand BS-7139), a collection drawn from various labels spanning the years 1945–55.

Esau Smith

No CD, but "My Gal Shaves" is included in the 1988 *Psychobilly*

anthology from Waardeloos in Holland (W-103).

Jesse Stone

RCA 8423-2-R (1988)
The RCA Victor Blues & Rhythm Revue
This remarkable collection contains Stone's 1949 "Cole Slaw."

The 1986 Atlantic LP anthology *Atlantic Honkers* includes three Stone recordings from 1955–56: "Night Life," "Hey Tiger," and "Barrel House."

The Treniers

BEAR FAMILY
BCD-15418 (Germany: 1988)
Cool It Baby
Eighteen recordings (seven previously unissued), 1953–56.
BEAR FAMILY
BCD-15419 (Germany: 1988)
Hey Sister Lucy
Eighteen recordings (seven previously unissued), 1947–56.
RCA 8423-2-R (1988)
The RCA Victor Blues & Rhythm Review
Contains "Squeeze Me" by Milt Trenier and His Solid Six (1953).

The 1983 Edsel LP *Rockin' Is Our Business* (ED 117), comprising sixteen recordings from 1951–55, and the 1989 *You're Killing Me* from Dr. Horse in Sweden (H-803), containing sixteen cuts from 1947–56, are still the best Treniers collections to date.

Big Joe Turner

ATLANTIC 8812-2 (1981)
The Boss of the Blues
Ten recordings—a beat-for-the-money CD reissue of the 1956 album of the same name. One cut, "I Want a Little Girl," is also included on the 1986 CD anthology *Atlantic Jazz Singers* (7 81706-2).
ATLANTIC 7 81293-2 (1985)
Atlantic Rhythm and Blues 1947–1974, Volume 1: 1947–1952
Contains "The Chill Is On," "Chains of Love," and "Sweet Sixteen."
ATLANTIC 7 81294-2 (1985)
Atlantic Rhythm and Blues 1947–1974, Volume 2: 1952–1955
Contains "Honey Hush," "Shake, Rattle and Roll," and "Flip Flop and Fly." The latter is also available on the 1989 Rhino CD *Billboard Top R&B Hits—1955* (R2 70641).
ATLANTIC 7 81295-2 (1985)
Atlantic Rhythm and Blues 1947–1974, Volume 3: 1955–1958
Contains "The Chicken and the Hawk," "Corrine, Corrina," and "Midnight Cannonball."
ATLANTIC 7 81663-2 (1986)
Big Joe Turner: Rhythm & Blues Years
Twenty-eight recordings, 1952–59.
ATLANTIC 7 81694-2 (1986)

Atlantic Blues: Piano
Contains "Roll 'Em, Pete" (but not "Cherry Red" from the LP set).
ATLANTIC 7 81695-2 (1986)
Atlantic Blues: Guitar
Contains "TV Mama."
ATLANTIC 7 81696-2 (1986)
Atlantic Blues: Vocalists
Contains "Oke-She-Moke-She-Pop" (but not "St. Louis Blues" from the LP set).
COLUMBIA CK 40652 (1987)
The 1940s: The Singers
Contains "Low Down Dirty Shame."
ATLANTIC 7 81752-2 (1989)
Greatest Hits
Twenty-one recordings.
ATLANTIC 7 90668-2 (1989)
Big Joe Rides Again
One recording from 1956 ("Pennies from Heaven"); nine from 1959. A beat CD reissue of a 1960 album (Atlantic SD 1332).

The 1988 Danish album *Boogie Woogie and More* (Official 6028) contains sixteen recordings from the years 1938–49. *I Don't Dig It,* from Jukebox Lil in Sweden (JB-618) includes sixteen recordings from the years 1940–49. The 1980 MCA collection *Early Big Joe* (MCA-1325, Jazz Heritage Series Vol. 26) contains fourteen Decca recordings from 1940–44. The 1977 Savoy album *Roots of Rock and Roll Vol. 2: Have No Fear, Big Joe Turner Is Here* (SJL 2223) brings together thirty-one recordings from the years 1945–47. One of the oldest and best Turner reissues is the Arhoolie LP *Jumpin' the Blues* (R 2004), a collection of twelve Swing Time recordings from 1948–49. The 1988 British album *Steppin' Out* (Ace CHD 243) features eight Freedom recordings from 1949–50 along with Turner's performance from the December 1947 "Just Jazz" concert in Los Angeles. Warner-Pioneer of Japan reissued the 1957 Atlantic album *Joe Turner* (P-4586A), while several Atlantic outtakes have been released in the French album *The 1956 Boss of the Blues Sessions: The Unissued Takes* (KC 108).

Index

A

Abramson, Herb, 5, 16, 17, 129
Ace, Johnny, 61, 170–175
Acuff, Roy, 104
Adams, Marie, 174
Akins, Dave, 97
Alexander, Glenn, 170
Alexander, John Marshall, Jr., 170
Alexander, Mrs. John, 170
Alexander, Reverend John, 170
Alexander, Sandra, 170
Allen, Anisteen, 167
Allen, Cathy, 86
Allen, Rex, 6
Almond, Lucky Joe, 8
Ambler, Eric, 178
Ammons, Albert, 119
Anderson, Ivie, 55, 57
Animals, 162
Anka, Paul, 161
Ann-Margret, 19
Arndt, Felix, 121
Arnold, Eddy, 181
Arnold, Kokomo, 90
Art Tatum and His Band, 25
Autry, Gene, 179

B

Bacon, Trevor, 46
Bailey, Buddy, 128, 129, 131, 132
Baker, Mickey 'Guitar', 160
Ballard, Hank, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149
Ballard, Henry Bernard, 145
Ballard, Jimmy, 6
Balliett, Whitney, 28
Ball, Tom, 89
'Bama State Collegians, 92
Barbour, J. Berni, 6
Bartholomew, Dave, 27
Bardu-Ali, 55
Barney Bigard Quintet, 93
Barnum, Pee Wee, 7
Barrett, Tracelene, 86
Basie, Count, 23, 27, 35, 65
Bass, Ralph, 51, 52, 53, 146
Beale Street Blues Boys, 170, 171, 173
Bee Bee King's Original Band, 171
Beldon, 86
Bennett, Tony, 9, 137
Benny Carter and His All-Star Orchestra, 25
Berg, Billy, 94
Berman, Bess, 94
Berman, Ike, 4
Berman, Irving, 5
Berry, Chuck, 40
Bihari brothers, 58
Bihari, Joe, 58
Bihari, Lester, 5, 58
Bihari, Saul, 4, 58
Bill Haley & the Four Aces of Western Swing, 104
Bill Haley & the Saddlemen, 104
Bill Haley and the Comets, 106
Bill Haley with Haley's Comets, 105
Bill Haley and His Comets, 105
Billy Ward and His Dominoes, 137
Blackwell, Otis, 19
Blanchard, Edgar, 77
Bland, Bobby "Blue," 170, 171
Blazers, 38, 57, 58, 59, 60, 174
Blue, Davey, 180
Board, Johnny, 173

Bolar, Abe, 24
Booth, Henry, 145
Boswell Sisters, 6
Boyd, Eddie, 139
Bradley, Will, 64, 119
Braun, Jules, 4, 79
Brazos Valley Boys, 165–166
Brenston, Jackie, 8, 104, 139–144
Brewer, Teresa, 96, 168
Brown, Arthur, 162
Brown, Billy, 134, 137
Brown, Charles, 3, 30, 34, 54–63
Brown, James, 51, 163
Brown, Johnny Mack, 124
Brown, Mattie, 54
Brown, Mose, 54
Brown, Piney, 8, 13, 19, 23
Brown, Roy, 7, 8, 50–51, 77–81, 163
Brown, Ruth, 17, 49, 67
Brown, True Love, 78
Brown, Wilbert, 78–79
Brown, Yancy, 78
Brumbalough, Frankie, 109
Bruner, Cliff, 90
Bulleit, Jim, 5, 50, 70
Bunn, Teddy, 26
Burnette, Johnny, 101
Burrows, Earl, 167
Butera, Sam, 8, 87

C

Cadillacs, 161
Calhoun, Charles E., 11, 17–18, 28, 130–131
California Symphony Orchestra, 162
Calloway, Cab, 19
Carol, Lily Ann, 86
Carr, Gunter Lee, 7
Carter, Asa, 38
Carter, Benny, 25, 65
Chandler, Jeff, 36
Chapman, Tracy, 22
Charioteers, 128
Charles Brown and His Smarties, 60
Charles Brown Trio, 60
Charles, Ezzard, 51
Charles, Ray, 17, 30, 42
Charlie Mingus & His Orchestra, 93
Charms, 6, 9, 137
Checker, Chubby, 148
Checkers, 137
Chess, Leonard, 5
Chess, Phil, 5
Ching, 13, 14, 19
Chords, 9
Chudd, Lew, 5
Churchill, Savannah, 4
Clark, Dick, 161
Clooney, Rosemary, 135
Clovers, 17, 127–132, 133
Coasters, 131
Cohen, Paul, 113, 151
Cole, Chip, 97
Cole, Nat King, 3, 34, 30–38, 39, 40, 54, 58, 80
Coles, Eddie, 31
Coles, Nathaniel Adams, 30
Coles, Perlina, 31
Coles, Reverend Edward, 31
Collegiates, 83
Collins, John, 38
Collins, Lester, 32
Como, Perry, 9
Confucius, 89
Cooke, Sam, 62
Costello, Frank, 138
Costello, James, 54
Costello, Lou, 36
Crayton, Pee Wee, 7
Creedence Clearwater Revival, 162
Crobsy, Bob, 90
Crosby, Bing, 78, 80, 89, 90
Crosby, Eddie, 6
Crows, 9, 137
Crudup, Big Boy, 40
Culley, Frank, 16, 17
Cullum, Lola Anne, 72–73

D

Dave Bartholomew's Orchestra, 27
Davenport, Cow Cow, 114
David, Sunny, 113
Davis, Abe, 151
Davis, Joe, 4
Davis, Maxwell, 74
DeKnight, Jimmy, 106, 107
Delmore Brothers, 6
Demaris, Ovid, 86
DePaul, Gene, 65
Di Iorio, Rolly, 88
Dillard, Varetta, 163, 174
Dixon, Floyd, 60
Dominoes, 6, 9, 106, 116, 129, 130, 133–138

Domino, Fats, 80, 112, 161
Dorsey, Jimmy, 3, 16, 64
Dorsey, Tommy, 3
Dougherty, Eddie, 24
Downhomers, 103
Drifters, 17, 67, 131, 137
Drifting Cowboys, 152
Duncan, Adolph, 170

E

Eckstine, Billy, 5, 16, 59, 78
Eddie Cole's Solid Swingers, 31
Edwards Sisters, 49
El-Dorados, 147
Elk's Rendezvous Band, 15
Ellington, Duke, 6, 14, 25, 55, 65
Ellington, Maria, 35, 36
Englund, Gene, 32
Ertegun, Ahmet, 5, 16, 17, 18, 19, 129
Evans, Ernest, 148
Excelsior Band, 92

F

Faith, Percy, 106
Fein, Hal, 18
Felder, Miss Janice, 54
Feld, Irving, 5
Ferguson, H-Bomb, 8
Fineaux, Jo-Jo, 181
Finney, Garland, 55
Fitzgerald, Ella, 39
"5" Royals, 147
Five Keys, 137
Five Wings, 174, 175
Fletcher, Dusty, 15
Flournoy, Espanola, 61
Flowers, Jesse, 140
Foley, Red, 6, 104, 115, 167
Fontana, Wayne. 156
Ford, Billy & Lillie, 161
Forrest, Earl, 171
Francis, Connie, 168
Francis, Panama, 160
Franklin, Aretha, 149
Fratianno, Jimmy, 86
Freddie Slack Trio, 26, 64
Freed, Alan, 1, 9, 160
Freedman, Max, 106
Frizzell, Lefty, 181
Fuller, Johnny, 174
Fuller, Sam, 36
Fulson, Lowell, 143

G

Gaines, Charlie, 39
Gamble, Cora, 54
Gant, Cecil, 3, 7, 8, 30, 69–71, 79
Gant, Pvt. Cecil, 70
Gayten, Paul, 42
Gene & Eunice, 9
Gerber, Marvin, 66
Gilbeaux, Gene, 92, 93
Gillett, Charlie, 17
G. I. Sing-Station, The, 70
Gladys Knight and the Pips, 145
Glover, Henry, 45–46, 51, 147, 148
Glover, Mrs. Henry, 51
Goldberg, Sammy "The Black Jew," 57, 58
Goodlow, Olive, 46, 49
Goodman, Benny, 3, 16, 83
Goodman, Gina Gail, 169
Goodman, Gregory Jackson, 169
Goodman, Wendell, 169
Gordon, Loy, 101
Grande, Tex, 5
Gray, Billy, 166
Greene, Al, 4, 16
Griffin Brothers, 8, 104
Grimes, Tiny, 7, 158
Griner, Flash, 109
Gunn, Mrs., 119
Gunter, hardrock, 114–118
Gunter, Rock, 118
Gunter, Sidney Louie, 115

H

Haley, Bill, 8, 9, 97, 103, 104, 105, 106, 121, 137
Halley, William John Clifton, 103
Halley, Young Bill, 103–108
Hall, James Faye "Roy," 113
Hall, Roy, 109–113
Halsey, Jim, 167
Hamilton, Roy, 163
Hammer, Jack, 162
Hammond, John, 23
Hampton, Lionel, 50, 58, 92, 100–101, 115

Handy, W.C., 36
Hank Ballard & the Midnighters, 148, 149
Happy Wilson's Golden River Boys, 115
Hardrock Gunter and the Pebbles, 115, 116
Harlan Leonard and His Rockets, 15
Harper, Leonard, 15
Harris, Bill, 128
Harris, Charles, 38
Harris, Luther, 46
Harris, Nellie, 46
Harris, Wynonie, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 17, 26, 45–53, 85, 92, 93, 101, 163
Hawkins, Coleman, 25
Hawkins, Erskine, 55, 92
Hawkins, Ginny, 155, 156, 157
Hawkins, Hawkshaw, 111
Hawkins, Jalacy, 157, 160
Hawkins, Screamin' Jay, 155–164
Hayes, Linda, 174
Heller, Eddie, 129
Hendrix, Jimi, 44
Henry, John "Shifty," 26
Hill, Don, 92, 93, 97
Hill, Raymond, 140, 142, 143
Hill, Smilin' Eddie, 5
Hines, Earl, 31
Holiday, Billy, 25, 32, 34
Holland, Jack, 97
Hooker, Earl, 144
Hooker, John Lee, 139
Hopkins, Lightnin', 73
Horn, Bob, 160
Hotcha Trio, 83
House, Son, 139
Houston, Robey, 171
Huddie, 20
Huff, Fleming, 54
Hughes, Howard, 86
Hunter, Evan, 107
Hunter, Ivory Joe, 54, 57
Hurte, Leroy, 5

I

Idol, Billy, 22
Ike Turner and His Kings of Rhythm, 142
Ink Spots, 58, 89, 90, 127
Innis, Louis, 6
Irwin, Frankie, 174

J

Jackie Brenston and His Delta Cats, 104, 139, 142, 143
Jackson 5, 163
Jackson Brothers, 8
Jackson, Bull Moose, 6, 67
Jackson, Little Son, 8
Jackson, Michael, 44
Jackson, Nellie, 165
Jackson, Tom, 165
Jackson, Wanda, 165–169
Jackson, Willis "Gator Tail," 8
Jacquet, Illinois, 32
James, Etta, 147
James, Harry, 3
Jesse Stone and His Blue Serenaders, 14
Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra, 93
Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra, 64
Joe Liggins and His Honeydippers, 93
Joe Sullivan and His Cafe Society Orchestra, 25
Joe Turner and His Fly Cats, 25
Johnny Board's Orchestra, 173
Johnny Moore's Three Blazers, 7, 34, 55, 57
Johnny Otis Orchestra, 173, 174
Johnny Sparrow and His Sparrows, 158
Johnny White and His Rhythm Riders, 123
Johnson, Buddy, 45, 49
Johnson, Ella, 78
Johnson, Lil, 6
Johnson, Maxine, 32
Johnson, Pete, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 119
Johnson, Robert, 22, 139
Jo-Jo Fineaux and His Hattiesburg Hepcats, 181
Jolson, Al, 90
Jones, Grandpa, 5
Jordan, Connie, 7, 8
Jordan, Louis, 4, 7, 8, 15, 17, 25, 39–44, 55, 58, 85, 93, 163
Josephson, Barney, 25

K

Katie (Big Joe Turner's sister), 23
Kaul, Saul M., 5
Kaye, Stubby, 39
Keely Gambardella, Dorothy, 86, 87
Kessler, Danny, 94

King, Carole, 36
King Cole Quartet, 32
King Cole Quintet, 32–33
King Cole Swingsters, 32
King Cole Trio, 31, 32, 33, 34, 57
King, Pee Wee, 115
"King Porter Stomp," 121
King, Riley "B.B.", 170, 171
Kirkland, Leroy, 160
Kizart, Willie, 140, 141
Knox, Buddy, 80
Konje, Professor Uriah, 89, 132
Krefetz, Lou, 129, 131, 132

L

Laine, Frankie, 34, 56
Lamont, Joe, 134
La Rosa, Julius, 97
Lee, George E., 14
Lee, Julia, 14
Lee, Roberta, 116
Leonard, Harlan, 15
Lewis, Jerry Lee, 37, 97, 101, 111, 113, 121, 141, 167
Lewis, Meade Lux, 119
Liggins, Jimmy, 141
Liggins, Joe, 58, 93
Linda Hayes & the Platters, 147
Lindsay, Merle, 165
Lloyd, Jimmy, 154
Logsdon, Evelyn, 150
Logsdon, Jimmie, 150–154
London, Mel, 144
Lonesome Cowboys, 123
Lorenzo Flennoy Trio, 26
Loretta, 104
Louis, Joe, 49
Louis Jordan and his Tympany Five, 40
Louis Jordan's Elk's Rendezvous Band, 40
Louis Prima and His Gleeby Rhythm Orchestra, 84
Louis Prima and His New Orleans Gang, 83
Love, Billie, 143
Loveman, Lenny, 21
Love, Preston, 52
Love, Roy, 20
Lovett, Baby, 17
Lovin' Sam and Spo-Dee-O-Dee, 41
Low, Charlie, 89
Loy Gordon & His Pleasant Valley Boys, 101
Lubinsky, Herman, 4
Lucas, Harold, 127, 128, 131, 132
Lucie, Laurence, 24
Lucky Millinder and His Orchestra, 46
Lukas, Al, 160
Lunceford, Jimmie, 15, 93, 95
Lutcher, Joe, 7

M

McAlpin, Vic, 153
McCann, Billy, 158
McCarthy, Senator Joseph, 9–10
McCoy, Robert, 114
McCraney, Edna, 143
McDonald, Enos William, 123
McDonald, Ethel, 123
McDonald, Sam, 123
McDonald, Skeets, 123–126
McGhee, Brownie, 7, 99, 100, 101, 102
McGhee, Granville, 99
McGhee, Stick, 99–102
McMurry, Lillian, 5
McNeil, David, 137
McPhatter, Clyde, 133, 137
McQuater, Matthew, 128
McRae, David, 91
MsShann, Jay, 163
Maddox Brothers and Rose, 6
Maione, Gia, 87
Manfred Mann, 162
Mann, Lois, 147
Mantle, Mickey, 95–96
Ma and Pa Rainey's Rabbit Foot Minstrels, 39
Maphis, Joe, 168
Markham, Pigmeat, 15
Marks, Rose, 135
Marshall, Kaiser, 39
Marsham, Viola, 5
Martin, Dean, 5
Marx, Groucho, 90
Matson, Arnold, 159
Mattis, James, 5, 171
Maybelle, Big, 163
Mays, Willie, 95
Mercer, Johnny, 3, 65
Merle Lindsay Band, 165
Mesner, Ed, 4–5, 18, 47, 50, 57, 58, 60
Mesner, Leo, 4–5, 47, 50, 57

Midnighters, 28, 133, 145–149, 147
Milburn, Amos, 3, 8, 26, 30, 61, 62, 72–76, 115
Miller, Dave, 8, 104, 105
Miller, Glenn, 3
Miller, Johnny, 33, 38
Millinder, Lucky, 46
Mills Brothers, 65, 127
Mills, Sidney, 15
Milton, Roy, 163
Ming and Ling, 89–91
Mingus, Charlie, 93
Mitchell, Billy, 130, 131
Mitchell, Herman "Tiny," 60
Moore, Bill, 26
Moorehead, Baron, 46
Moore, Johnny, 7, 34, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 62, 174
Moore, Merrill, 119–122, 168
Moore, Oscar, 31, 32, 34, 38, 56, 58, 59
Moore, Scotty, 80
Moore, Wild Bill, 7
Morgan, George, 104
Morris, Joe, 130
Morrison, Jim, 22
Morris, Philip, 38
Morse, Ella Mae, 3, 64–68
Morton, Jelly Roll, 121
Muddy Waters, 30, 139, 140
Mullican, Moon, 90
Myers, James, 106

N

Nathan, Sydney, 4, 145, 147
Nat King Cole Trio, 6, 56, 60
Nelson, Ken, 120, 124, 168
Nelson, Richard A., 4, 5, 69
Nelson, Willie, 22
Newman, Joe, 92
Nichols, Red, 83
Noel, Hattie, 7
Nugetre, 129
NuTones, 147

O

Oberstein, Eli, 85
O'Connell, Helen, 64
Odum, Tommy, 109
O'Neal, Johnny, 140
O'Neil, Jim, 141
Ono, Yoko, 38
Orioles, 6, 127, 128, 137
Oscar Moore and the Three Blazers, 34
Otis, Johnny, 7, 8, 42, 55, 57, 80, 145, 173, 174

P

Page, Hot Lips, 24, 25
Parker, Colonel, 77
Parker, Sonny, 101
Parker, Tom, 10
Pat, Stan, 158
Patton, Charley, 139
Pendergast, 13
Penny, Hank, 6
Perkins, Carl, 113, 125, 167
Pete Johnson and His Boogie Woogie Boys, 24
Petrillo, James, Caesar, 2, 8, 26
Philip, John, 129
Phillips, Sam C., 5, 10, 104, 140, 141, 142, 143, 171
Pierce, Lonnie, 151
Pierce, Webb, 111, 112, 113
Polizzi, Louise, 83, 86
Pop, Iggy, 154
Porter, Cole, 15–16
Powell, Pastor Adam Clayton, 35
Presley, Elvis, 1, 2, 10, 19, 45, 51, 67, 77, 78, 80, 90, 106, 107, 108, 111, 117, 125, 141, 167, 173, 179, 182, 183
Presley, Gladys, 6
Presley, Jesse Garon, 178, 181
Preston, Jimmy, 7, 105
Price, Alan, 162
Price, Vincent, 164
Prima, Leon, 83
Prima, Louis, 80, 82–88
Prince, Wesley, 31, 33, 60

Q

Quinn, Bill, 4, 5

R

Raase, Alma, 86
Rathbone, Basil, 44
Ravens, 8, 16, 67, 127, 128

Raye, Don, 65, 66, 73
Red, Piano, 7
Reenie, Aunt, 179, 180, 182
Rene, Leon, 4, 32, 57, 58
Rene, Otis, 4, 32, 57
Rhodes, Art, 151
Rhythm Debs, 14
Ricciardi, Catherine, 86
Richard, Little, 8, 84, 162
Richards, Stan, 97
Ricks, Jimmy, 127
Riley, Billy, 78
Roberts, Kenny, 103
Robey, Don, 5, 171, 173, 174, 175
Robins, 167
Robins, Marty, 111
Robinson, Ikey, 6
Robinson, Jesse Mae, 61
Robinson, Nadine, 31
Rock, Frank J., 14
Rockin' Rollin' Treniers, The, 94
Rogues of Rhythm, 31
Rolling Stones, 73, 163, 176
Roselli, John, 86
Rovers, 174
Royals, 145, 147
Roy Hall and His Cohutta Mountain Boys, 109, 110, 111
Rupe, Art, 5

S

Saddlemen, 98
Saddle, Rock & Rhythm Boys, 120
Sausage, Doc, 7
Scherman, Robert, 56, 57
Scott, Mabel, 61
Scott, Zola, 61
Sears, Big Al, 160
Seekers, 162
Shakespeare, William, 78
Shee, Hoo, 89
Shelton, Billy, 127, 128
Shelvin, Tommy, 77
Sherman, Robert, 4
Simone, Nina, 161, 162
Simpson, Conquest, 54, 55
Simpson, Swannie, 54
Sims, Willie, 140, 142
Sinatra, Frank, 19, 38, 65, 80, 89, 90, 154, 155
Singleton, Charles, 18
Skinner, Jimmie, 151
Slack, Freddie, 3, 26, 64, 65, 66, 119
Slim, Memphis, 7, 104–105
Sloan, Gertrude, 49
Smith, Annie, 146
Smith, Eddie, 146
Smith, Esau, 176–184
Smith, Henry, 24
Smith, Johnny, 183
Smith, Keely, 85, 86, 87
Smith, Lawson, 145
Smith, Leroy, 39
Smith, Pinetop, 114
Smith, Trixie, 6
Smith, Willie "The Lion," 25
Sparrow, Johnny, 158
Spo-Dee-O-Dee, 41, 100
Stitt, Sonny, 92
Stone, Cliffie, 124
Stone, Evvi, 12
Stone, Fred, 13
Stone, Jesse, 11, 14, 12–21, 28, 91, 130
Stone, Julia, 13
Sutch, Lord, 162
Sutton, Charles, 145
Swan Silverstone Singers, 127
Sykes, Roosevelt, 69

T

Tatum, Art, 25, 54
Taylor, Danny, 147
Taylor, Sam, 17, 160
Tennessee Mountain Boys, 5
Tex Grande and His Range Riders, 5
Theard, Sam, 15, 41, 100
Them, 162
Thomas, Jimmy, 143
Thompson, Hank, 121, 165–166, 167
Thornton, Willie Mae "Big Mama," 171, 173, 174
Tin Pan Alley, 106
Tony Grimes and His Rockin' Highlanders, 158
Toombs, Ruby, 129
Trenier, Buddy, 92, 94, 97
Trenier, Claude, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97
Trenier, Clifford, 92, 93, 97
Trenier, Denny, 92
Trenier, Milt, 94, 97
Trenier, Olivia, 92
Treniers, 8, 92–98
Trenier, Skip, 97
Trenier Twins, 93, 94

Trenier Twins & the Gene Gilbeaux Quartet, 93
Tucker, Joseph Vernon, 23
Turner, Big Joe, 3–4, 6, 9, 13, 17, 22–29, 46, 64–65
Turner, Ike, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144
Turner, Isaiah, 140
Turner's Kings of Rhythm, 143
Turner, Tina, 144

V

Valentine, Billy, 60
Van Loan, James, 134, 137
Van Pebbles, Melvin, 162
Varsity Seven, 25
Veliotes, John, 55, 145
Ventura, Nica, 87
Vincent, Gene, 126
Vinson, Cleanhead, 163

W

Walker, Mel, 8
Walker, T-Bone, 65
Wallace, Mrs., 54
Wallace, Sid, 144
Waller, Fats, 54
Wallichs, Glenn E., 34
Ward, Billy, 133, 134, 135, 137
Warsaw Concerto, 55
Washington, Dinah, 58
Washington, Fats, 173
Wayne Fontana and His Mindbenders, 155
Webb, Chick, 4, 15, 39
Weldon, Casey Bill, 40
White, Bud, 109
White, Charlie, 130, 137
White, Johnny, 123
Whitehead, Howard, 151
Who, 162
Will Bradley's Orchestra, 64, 119
Willet, Slim, 125
Williams, Billy, 161
Williams, Dave, 112
Williams, Dootsie, 26
Williams, Eddie, 55–56, 57, 59, 60
Williams, Hank, 6, 22, 88, 101, 104, 105, 110, 111, 115, 116, 118, 121, 151, 152, 153, 181
Williams, Leo, 59
Williams, Mary Lou, 23
Williams, Tex, 115
Willie, Fannie, 61
Willie, Lou, 29
Willis, Chuck, 162
Wills, Bob, 121
Wills, Johnny Lee, 90
Wilson, Happy, 115, 116
Wilson, Jackie, 137, 138
Winley, Harold, 128, 132
Winley, Paul, 132
Wong, Jadin, 89
Wood, Del, 111
Wood, Macy, 5
Wood, Randy, 5, 154
Woods, Milton, 44
Woods, Sonny, 145
Woods, Thomas, 127, 128

Y

Yelvington, Malcolm, 101
York Brothers, The, 6
Young, Arlene, 61
Young, Ernie, 5
Young, Lee, 32, 38
Young, Lester, 23, 49

$10.00/MUSIC
(Canada: $13.50)

"IF YOU'RE CURIOUS ABOUT WHERE TODAY'S MUSIC REALLY CAME FROM, THIS BOOK HAS SOME OF THE ANSWERS."

ROLLING STONE

"As pure history, Unsung Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll *is indispensable, and that's the least of it. Nick Tosches is about the best writer on rock 'n' roll there is, or ever has been."*
Michael Herr

"This book is so sharp about the music, and so tantalizing about some of the obscure material, that it really ought to have come packaged with a set of twelve records."
Time

The myth has it that rock 'n' roll was born the day young Elvis Presley entered Sam Phillips's Sun Records studio in 1954. But the truth is different. The music now known as rock 'n' roll was being recorded by performers both black and white, northern and southern, and released on small independent labels across the country for years before Elvis brought it to the masses. Big Joe Turner's rocking blues, Wynonie Harris's shouting R&B, Louis Jordan's jump band, Louis Prima's wild-man jive, Nat King Cole's surging early combo—the music of these and many other performers was wilder, freer, fresher, fiercer, and every bit as hard as what later became widely known as rock 'n' roll.

In portraits of twenty-five people who made this brash music, Nick Tosches fashions a fascinating history of rock 'n' roll's mysterious early days. *Unsung Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll* also features a chronology of rock 'n' roll that starts with 1945 and ends with 1955, and a detailed discography (including CD reissues) that will give the most jaded collector a new lease on life.

NICK TOSCHES is the author of the novel *Cut Numbers*. His nonfiction works include *Hellfire*, *Power on Earth*, and *Country*. He lives in New York City.

Cover design by Jackie Seow

Harmony Books
a division of Crown Publishers, Inc.
New York
Copyright © 1991 by Harmony Books, a division of Crown Publishers, Inc. Printed in the U.S.A.

90000
9 780517 580523
ISBN 0-517-58052-7